

# God and Us

The holy covenant



A Discipleship School

David Boan

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### Unit 1

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Beginning in 1975 as courses for instruction of Christians, the Discipleship School has been in operation since 1983. The course was a basic instruction in the Christian faith and that practice has not really altered. But over the years there has been significant changes in the Australian scene.

The Australian expression of the life of Christian church has reflected a rolling series of “waves of interest” and The School has adapted the application of the Christian faith to these changes. The various editions have been altered roughly every 10 years.

This current 2013 edition makes some alterations to the 2009 edition, which was itself an amalgum of the teaching of the 1983 edition and the 1999 edition.

The 1999 marked a sharp change in presentation of the Gospel, both in the way the Atonement was expressed and also in the decision to major upon the life and ministry of Jesus in a way that was equal in weight to his death and resurrection.

The apostolic message and preaching centred on the risen Christ, the gospel that has been presented here majors on the Letter to the Romans for its practical applications and also takes into account the wonderful work of the Saviour both as our Representative man and Substitute.

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*This booklet encourages you to -*

*1. Read the downloads from the website [www.davidboan.net](http://www.davidboan.net) which are referred to in the "See..." headings which are set flush right.*

*2. Constantly read the Bible references for yourself. Always test everything that you hear; for the aim is to make your own convictions clear and solid for yourself.*

*3. Keep reading the Discipleship School Book after each session.*

*Each teaching session only covers a selection of the subjects under consideration. The book helps to build up the detail of each evening's teaching and they let you check what is being taught against the Bible text itself.*

*If you ever wish to pass on what you hear then the full set of books are a starting reference for you.*

# I – Introduction

God has freely created us to share His life. When we fell away from this, He has redeemed us to be restored to His first intention. Our course looks at what He has done for us in Christ; both before the creation and within history. We examine His gracious work already done 'for' us, what He is doing now 'in' us by His Spirit, and what He will do 'with' us when Christ returns. We need to know that our everyday experience of salvation is based on real things that God has done for us in Christ.

## *1 - Our Theme: Salvation to Holiness: Reconciled by Christ's death; saved by His life*

*"... having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" Romans 5.9-10 NASV.*

Sometimes we have learned that we are saved from the power of the devil; and that is true. But this text, as it is found in the letter to the Romans, tells us that the first person we are saved "from" is God. To understand that requires us to know that He is holy. For then we shall comprehend why His characteristic response to our rebellion is anger, or to use the old word, "wrath". In this case, we learn, as fallen Adam did, that our major fear was God [Genesis 3.10]. It was His holiness that was so dangerous to us, His holy anger threatened to destroy us.

But even though it is true that the wrath of God is a danger to us, our text tells us that we have ceased to be enemies of God, and have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son. If the death has brought us to reconciliation and salvation from His wrath, then what we are saved "to" is something which is experienced by sharing in His resurrected life.

These booklets cover ten sections and, while it certainly deals very much with what it means to be saved "from", its major emphasis is what it is that we are saved "to". It reveals that we have been restored to what was always in the mind of God for us from the beginning. We were meant to share His life. He has never deviated from this goal. It is "to" where He is taking us that makes sense of what He has done for us; what He is doing in us now; and what He will share with us forever.

He has saved us to share His holiness, to share His life - this is the much neglected element in the life of the Christian church today.



*2 - What God, in Christ, has done for us in the past, what He is doing in us right now, what He will share with us forevermore.*

Our ten sections are arranged in a sequence:

In steps 1-5 we concentrate on what He has done “for us”; matters which we could not do for ourselves and so must receive from Him as His gift to us. These “givens” refer to His creation of us and also His redemption of us once we lost our relation to Him.

The stress here falls upon the work of God done through His Son, Who as the Word of God, was God’s agent in creating us. In His taking flesh and coming among us, He is God’s Agent for redeeming us and re-creating us to share the life of God again.

Sections 6-9 deal with what God is doing “in us” right now, as we live to manifest the life we are sharing of the risen Son of God.

Here, we concentrate upon the work of the Spirit of Christ, Who has taken up residence in our persons, empowering us to live out of our union with Christ.

Section 10 speaks of what it will mean for us and for Christ, who is our life, to be bodily revealed in the flesh again. It speaks of our future hope that we shall be with Him and of the life He will share “with us” - it will be a consummate knowing of Him “face to face” forever. This future hope has a great effect upon our present living. It purifies us as we wait for Him.

*3 – In life, our experience, though it is real, yet is not final.*

For many Christians, when they reflect back on their coming to know of their salvation in Christ, what is uppermost in their minds is their own subjective experience. Recalling how they felt at the time and perhaps the matters that troubled them deeply then, troubles that seemed so overwhelming. Perhaps there was great relief of coming to hear that God was not counting their sins when they first thought He was - there was the thrill of forgiveness and personal cleansing.

Perhaps their salvation was “from” the dire circumstances in which they were enmeshed. And there is nothing wrong with that. For the relief in being rescued and the accompanying feelings are very real. And if we think of our salvation “from” in terms of a rescue from sin and death as release from powers that enslaved us, these are real to us, being consequences of our rebellion working out through our life.

We do not need to question the reality of our feelings, but their finality we certainly must. For if we stay with our own subjective perspective, then the objective realities fail to become the anchor for our feelings.

The objective events - the things that God has actually done for us in Christ that have taken place - are not simply a reflection of our own perspective, concern the Person of God Himself. When our focus is upon Him, then we understand that it is because we have been reconciled "to" Him that we are therefore saved "from" the other matters. As our relationship is set right with Him, on His terms, based on His understanding of the problem, then we can measure the truth of our experiences; and we can see if our feeling are appropriate to our reconciled relationship with Him. In this way, our subjective feelings can powerfully confirm what is truly based.

This book sets out to ground our experience and its meaning upon the objective truth of God's revelation about Himself and us. It is concerned with who He is and who we are, and what it means to know one another and to share together the life He intended for us.

It has a strong emphasis on clearing away hindrances to receiving God's Word, teaching us how to appropriate the wonderful gift and opportunity of repentance.

## 2 - Covenant is prior to Creation

### 4 - A chosen Bride - now waiting

*See 2 Corinthians 11.2-3*

We are reading the New Testament and the Old Testament as Christians, in possession of the revelation that God has made known through Christ. So we find ourselves collectively as a Bride in waiting for her Groom to return and gather us to Himself. All our language of intimacy begins with this corporate perspective. We now find ourselves betrothed, and collectively, we are preparing to be with our Groom as a fulfillment of our betrothal to Him; we are heading for a life with a husband.

This "waiting" is the eschatological perspective of living between the going of our Groom to the time when we see his returning "for us". During this time we are preparing in a way that involves us in:

- [1] Already learning how to live off the his life He as already established "for us".
- [2] As a waiting bride we need to know our Bridegroom's history
- [3] Listening to the Spirit as He instructs how to please the Bridegroom
- [4] Learning how to be obedient to the Bridegroom's voice and effective in the Bridegroom's life of serving of others
- [5] Learning the cost of being associated with a suffering Bridegroom; how to suffer for his sake. This is integral to entering into his life here and now before the suffering stops when He comes.

## *5 - You have not chosen me ... I have chosen you*

*See Jn. 16. 16*

Jesus reminds the infant church, taken from among Israel, who is listening to Him, that they are to know that it is the choice of the Groom for them, not their choice of Him, that is the bedrock of their relationship, as it is the secret of their effectiveness, of their own works. The meaning of what they eventually come to do is found in the choice of him for them, and his appointment that their works should remain, as His do.

This takes us back to the basis of covenant as we are given to understand it in the life of Israel; as long as we recognise here that the fulfilment of this covenant -and so its "newness" is what is being brought to Israel and, as the wall breaks down between Jew and Gentile in his death, to all men and women.

## *6 - Our Bridegroom's former life*

Like every bride in waiting, we are to spend our time in catching up on everything that we can about His former life so that we can prepare to live with Him, to honour Him and to so live with Him that we know His pleasure.

*the Word of God*

*See John 1.1-14*

It is the work of the Spirit of Christ to instruct us about our Groom; he will reveal those things which the ascended Christ instructs Him to do so. One of the most significant things He reveals through the apostolic men Jesus authorised to speak on his behalf was the that Jesus is the incarnation of the very Word of God. Before the Word of God took flesh, we are given to understand that He was in the beginning with God, that He was with God and that He was God. [John 1.1-3].

*Son of God*

*See Colossians 1.13-23*

The titles of our Groom are extensive and, being 'in the Spirit', we are in a place to know that the Father has sent the Son into the world for the express work of bringing us to completion as his creatures who were made in the image of his Son [See the later sections on Being a Creature].

We have also learned that all things were made through Him and also for Him, that He is before all things and that whatever was made holds together in Him.

*Chosen in Him*

*See Ephesians 1.3-14; Romans 8.28-30*

We have also learned that we were chosen "in Him" by the Father before the foundation of

the world was laid down - before the creation itself. So we learn that in the life of our Groom, within the inner relations of the Trinity, the Father, in looking upon His Son saw us "in Him", and chose us to be holy and blameless before Him. This was our destiny - it goes all the way back to the choice of the Father in the Son.

No wonder that the Apostle Paul can speak of us as those who have been "called according to God's purpose, foreknown, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. It was to this end we were called, justified and glorified in Him. We are an elected people because our Groom is the elected Son of God who has come to us as Son of Man and done everything necessary to make us a Bride for Himself. We have entered covenant and we must understand that as prior even to our creation.

*7 - God elects Himself to be ours: "I will walk among you and be your God and you shall be my people..." [Leviticus 26.12].*

The things we know of our Groom have actually come to us in the last days in which we live. This revelation made in, and through Him, has caused us to know matters that took place in the inner relations of God, the Trinity, before He created the world for us.

We understand that the love that flows out of the Father for His Son was the matrix in which we have found the Father foreseeing us "in Him". This means that the desire for God to share his life with us was foundational to the creation, and is the reason that the record of the creation is given to us in the covenant terms - and so presumes matters of the covenant which are given in history later to the creation - with Abram. These terms nevertheless are the presupposition of the very creation itself. This is what our Groom's prior history has made clear to us.

We are able to see the movement of the covenant explicitly within the history of Israel; as God made himself known to Abram, the patriarchs, and later to Israel, as He took them out of slavery in Egypt and into the promise land via the wilderness.

It is helpful to look at the basis of the covenant initiative of God,

[1] "I will be ..." God, in the freedom of His own loving decision, pronounced himself the God of his people and humankind. So the covenant, in its foundation is not about God making decisions about others. First, He makes a decision about Himself.

He elects Himself to be a covenant God, to be the companion of men and women. It is in this election - this choice of Himself - that He elects them to be his companion. This means that, amongst other things:

[a] God's covenant partner does not decide to belong to this covenant. All we can

do here is to confirm that God has determined us to be His partner.

[b] However, we are not remain passive in this; we are be thankful, gratefully observing the covenant made by God and to bear witness to it in our actions. This really is all that we must do.

For it is the fact that we do not deserve to enter into covenant with God; this is why it is called a covenant of grace - for it is initiated and maintained only because God in His grace constantly turns towards his partner. That is why it is a covenant between unequal partners, for God is merciful and men and women are in need of his mercy.

[c] The two-sided operation of the covenant is determined by its one-sided foundation through God Himself.

[d] The covenant does not discover Israel as already existing [Genesis 11-12], but it is the covenant that creates Israel. [This is true for the Bride herself - she comes to have life through the seeking Groom; and that through his death].

### *8 - The "new" covenant of Jeremiah 31.31-34.*

The covenant with Israel is renewed a number of times throughout Israel's history. Indeed, they found that to keep their side of the covenant in obedience to God was very difficult, opposed as it was by their own fleshly life. Eventually, under the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord began to speak of a new covenant, not like the former one which, from Israel's side, they constantly "broke".

The 'newness' of the covenant does mean that we talk here of two covenants, nor is it a replacement of the covenant with Israel by another. There is only one covenant with God. This prophecy of Jeremiah's actually will make clear what God had always had in his mind to do with Israel through the initial covenant.

What changes here is not the substance of the first covenant - which is in every way affirmed - but the form or its 'economy'; that is, how it will come to be administered in the last days of which Jesus' work is the fulfillment. So it is a new form which is consistent with these changed conditions; for Israel is now capable of a response - in Christ Jesus - which she was not formerly able to do. The new covenant then, if we can speak of a replacement, consists in such a positive replacement as this.

Formerly, from man's side, the covenant was open insofar that men and women attempted to meet the demands of the covenant and could not - they found that they "broke" it. Now, God will make the covenant from man's side a closed covenant. It will not have to do with their works and efforts; rather, as it will consist in them taking refuge - by simply trusting Him - in

the works of another, their Bridegroom. For He has come “for them”, and has offered to God the proper response to Him that Israel never did nor could; He has offered it in their place and in their stead. It will now be kept, not because men and women are better, but because it will be mutually kept as God has turned to them Himself. He has also turned them to Him as well, equipping them with a new heart and new spirit.

[a] The new covenant is a writing of his law on their renewed hearts

[b] As a consequence, all will know God. This new administration abolishes the distinction between those who know and those who don't, between the wise man and the fool, between the teacher and the taught, the prophets and the people.

[c] The forgiveness of their sins will eliminate the “broken” covenant and leads to the inward gift which eliminates their guilt. In forgiveness God eliminates the unfaithfulness of Israel.

## 3 – Being a Creature

Our creaturely existence in space and time [history] means that we are dependant on God. He has set our origin and likeness. Who we are and how we relate are set by Him. Having fallen, we have lost our original, undisturbed relationship with God. While we lost the freedom to decide in a true setting yet we are still significant and accountable.

*9 – Being dependant on God for our origin and restoration.*

*See #2009.02 The Beginning, Part 2.*

Our most foundational and basic relation to God is that of a creature to Creator. This seems an obvious place to start, but, as we shall see, it is important not to take anything for granted. It is wise to acknowledge all that is really true about the universe, God and yourself. Such acknowledgements not only bring God pleasure, they are our decision to align ourselves with the truth. This is both a position of blessing and safety.

To say that God has made us means that God, out of His own freedom, decided to bring us, as a human race and personally, into existence. He is our originator. He has, through your parents, brought you to conception and has overseen your formation in the womb of your mother. He has brought you to birth and has guided your growth and coming to maturity to this very day.

Further, to have come under the sound of the Christian gospel and to be drawn by God leads us to know Him by His gracious call to which we have willingly responded. Speaking personally, He has embarked on a work with you to bring you to wholeness in your spirit, soul and

body. It is true, you are not in that place now - you are still under construction. But your future goal, in respect of God's decision concerning you is assured.

*"...Now may the God of peace sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5.23.)*

## *10 – Being dependant on God for our pattern.*

*See #2009.02 The Beginning, Part 16-18*

God has made us to be like Him. We had no choice about that. We simply find ourselves set in relation to God and made in such a way as we answer to Him, we have a correspondence to Him. We have this relational way laid out for us in reading listed above right.

### *[i] Joint lordship*

Genesis 1 presents the creation [Hebrew. *bara* make ] of the man and the woman against the backdrop of the wider creation; yet what differentiates them from the rest of the creatures is their likeness to God. Chapter 1 also concluded with the blessing of the man and the woman. This blessing took the form of the command to multiply, fill the earth and to subdue it. This was nothing less than a mandate to govern it as joint lords of their given domain. The view presented of the man and the woman in Genesis 1 is of a unit, set within the rest of the creation. Their "image-bearing" constitutes their humanity; their lordship of the earth is jointly held.

### *[ii] Image of God*

Tom Smail, in his book "Like Father, Like Son", points out that Gen 1.28 interweaves three ideas: the human imaging of God, human dominion over the earth and gendered human relationships; the last mentioned is an the expression of the image and the possibility of the dominion.

He shows that there are two Hebrew words expressing the idea of image; *selem*, which speaks of an image as a representation of that from which it derives, and *demut* which emphasises the likeness or similarity to the image it resembles and from which it is derived.

Speaking of "image" as representation; *Selem* was used of pagan gods and kings who ruled on earth, understood as both representing and acting in the name of one who ruled in heaven. The usage here in Genesis will mean that the dominion which the man and the woman exercise is a consequence of them being a representation of God.

Speaking of "image" as likeness to God; *Demut* expresses that the image corresponds to the original, implying that humans rule on the earth because of a real resemblance between the divine being who created us and the human being that is created.

That we are like God is not explained anywhere in the Old Testament. However, things are made clearer in the New Testament; where the imaging language re-appears.

### *11- Fully human in Christ*

The final revelation of the image of God is Christ. He is seen as the one Man who is the image of God. So, we will know what it means to be in the image of God when we know what it means for Christ to be the image.

There is a distinction to be made between being “in the image” [Adam] and to “be the image” [Christ]. Colossians 1.15 looks back beyond Adam to an original that has become visible in Christ, who is the model and source of all creation.

Adam reflects God as his creature: his imaging is coincident with his creation. Christ images God as being himself integral to the life and being of the God He images. The Greek word εἰκων - from which we get the word icon. When applied to Christ, it carries the idea that he participates in the nature of God, he is not simply a copy. He visibly manifests and perfectly reveals God's nature in human form.

The imaging of God in God by God is the basis of a human imaging. What the Word of God is, as uncreated Son of God who images his Father, he is also in his incarnation as the created human being, Jesus of Nazareth, that he has become. In his humanity that reflects what he is in his divinity, he becomes the last Adam, the ultimate human being that Adam was meant to be.

Hebrews 1.3 speaks of the “stamp” of God. Here χαρακτήρ takes the place of εἰκων in the Colossians passage. It is a word used for the stamp of the die – what is the original pattern - impressed onto the wax; the word is also used for the imprint the die makes onto the wax – what is the resulting image.

This usage implies that Christ is both the divine prototype that is stamped on to our humanity and so imparts to it the divine image, and also the human being who has received that image and is the perfect expression of it - fresh, new, authentic and complete.

#### *[iii] Christ imparts humanity to us*

Christ does not just display God – reflecting humanity – He imparts humanity to us. Christ's humanity is the means by which his divine likeness becomes accessible to us. We cannot become God but He does become human in the incarnation and so reveals what it means to be authentically human to exist in the image of God. This is not something to copy, as if in our own strength we could; that would make Christ just a human example that was unreachable by us. Rather, his risen and glorified humanity transforming and re-shaping us into the same likeness by the action of His Spirit. This is also the basis for our shared life with God.



Jesus is the Son of God; as the creed has it "God of God, light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things are made". He can reveal, reconcile, and take us into the presence of the Father as the only Son of the Father. This is something Adam, who failed to know God as father, could never do.

Our final destiny is to be transformed into the glory of Christ [Romans 8.29-30]. The glory of God is so mirrored in the humanity of Jesus, that when we are exposed to that we are transformed by it, so that we increasingly manifest it with increasing clarity [2 Corinthians 3.18]. This transformation is a present work of God upon and in us, going on all the time of our Christian life. So it is both a present process and a final destiny. We were made human in our creation in order that we might become fully and authentically human in our re-creation in Christ.

This ultimate purpose was already in view in Genesis. Romans 8.29 is the final meaning of Genesis 1.26-27. The grace of God to us in Christ does not replace natural creation but perfects it - bringing it to its goal.

So we see that the final revelation of what the image of God is not found in Adam, but in Christ. *[After Smail loc. cit.]*

*[iv] Redemption through Christ makes us full, human persons*

Torrance [1983] page 78-79, speaks of Christ as the "personalising Person" and the "humanising Man". What Torrance is pointing to is that, Jesus of Nazareth, is the coming of God to us as true Man. He reveals God to us as he reconciles us to God.

He not only takes our old man - the man we were in Adam - to death upon the cross, bringing it to a decisive finish; but He also, throughout his lifetime constantly, moment by moment, has offered to God on our behalf the proper human response that we should have offered, but did not and could not.

So He has brought that fleshly life back into obedience to God; this He did for us and our sakes. So, as resurrected and ascended, the glorified Christ has imparted His beautiful, mature humanity to us by His Spirit. In this way our de-personalised state - with a defiled and degraded humanity - is now, by his Spirit, being conformed to the image of God's own Son and we are brought to the goal of our creation through such a redemption.

## 12 - Transacting clearly with our covenant God

*See #2009.02 The Beginning 8-10,15-18*

As we are in covenant as relational creatures made in God's image we answer to Him. We are built for this reciprocal relating - a responding to each other, back and forth. So there is something very important in transacting with God.

We have seen that the works and the Word of God is the revelation of His Person [See #2009.02 The Beginning 13-14]. We relate to God as he does to us; through word and work - speech and action. Although God knows our hearts and our thoughts, He does not encourage us to communicate to Him by thinking to Him, or directing our thoughts towards Him. He asks us to speak. And this means that we must first think what we are to say and then decide to say it.

My advice is to say it out loud. This is important for, although we must first think to formulate our prayers, prayer is not thinking; prayers are spoken communications to God. So you will find you are encouraged to speak to God; for that is a deed. And after we have communicated with the Lord, we must know that we have done so; that we have a request before Him.

To do that, we must know the difference between what we have thought and a word which we said; the former is within ourselves, the latter is a communication - a conversation - we had with God.

[As we shall see, mental telepathy is an occult action we are forbidden to us.]

## 4 – Fallen, yet significant and decisive

*Being significant and accountable we live with the results of what we have done in our collected and personal history. As fallen creatures we are involved in choosing between good and evil alternatives. Our decisions sometimes reflect habitual and trained responses. Our inability to perform sometimes worry us; we can decide yet doubt that it matters. We are often confused as well; we can even become double minded – committed to two, mutually exclusive paths at the same time.*

### 13 – Deciding as significant individuals, as people who matter.

*See: #1990.02 Framework 1,3  
#2009.06 Having Fallen, part 11-13*

A study of Genesis 1-3, particularly the third chapter, teaches us that God has made us ca-

pable of deciding matters. Further, having decided matters and acted upon them, we have a real effect in the world God has made.

*[i] Living with the results of what we have done*

This also means that, having decided to do things, and having the results before us, we now have to also decide other matters in the light of the results of our own sins and the sins of others in the world. To say nothing of the true and good decisions in the light of which we also have to decide as well. Each of us then, has to live with the results of our decisions in the past. The Fall informs us of this so clearly [See # 1990.02 Framework 1,3 ]. For the whole world as we know it is now marred and changed because of the decisions of the first man and woman as well as those who have followed, including ourselves.

*[ii] Accountable to God*

As made in God's image, being decisive and significant is our style because it is God's style. It also implies that He will call us to account. He takes our actions seriously, and so must we.

## *14 – God's freedom and ours*

When we speak, then, in the context of Genesis 1-2, of God "deciding" matters, we need to be careful that we do not carry over a mistaken idea, drawn from our rebellious position, and attach it to the meaning of "deciding". For when God "decides," He does not do so as a creature - no one presents Him with a set of alternatives. There is no one before Him in time and there is no one who precedes Him in authority. God simply wills and does what He wants. He knows His own mind; there is, for Him, no alternatives at a given moment of time. His mind is the Good mind. When God decides something, then, He does not decide between a set of alternatives, nor does He choose to be obedient to another, as a personal creature does.

## *15 – Having fallen, we are still decisive, significant creatures*

When we say that God "decides," we need to be sure that we are not implying that He decides as we do. Let us examine two aspects of creaturely deciding which will help us to understand how we are to think about the will of God.

*[i] Deciding "between" good alternatives*

Where we live today, we usually think of "deciding" as a "deciding between" one course of action and another. This "choosing between" alternatives is quite appropriate for us because we are creatures; we are "presented" with what the Creator provides for us. We have a freedom within the form He has provided for us. Yet we need to understand that there are differences in the decision-making Adam and Eve performed where they lived, and the decision-making we perform where we live now.

In the Garden, there is a choice between a number of “good” things. Should the man or the woman wish to lie under a tree or dig the garden, these are choices presented by God as proper and “good” because these choices are in accordance with God’s mind for man. Man is free to do them, just as he is free to choose not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These are choices between “good” alternatives as God presents them. They are truly free choices because they are a freedom within the form that the “good” mind of God has created for His creatures. They are free choices because, if chosen, they not only mean an experiencing of God’s freedom for man, they also do not lead to a place of bondage and slavery.

These free choices within the form given do not jeopardise the future experience (knowledge) of God’s freedom for man. In this way, Genesis teaches us that voluntary obedience - a free decision to obey - is the way God intended man to experience freedom. Free choice, in this sense, does not arise from the rebellion - it is in the world before the Fall.

*[iii] Deciding “between” good and evil*

In the second place we need to see that because we live in a fallen world there can now be a choice between what is good and what is evil - between what is the mind of God and what is not. This is often mistakenly referred to as “free choice”. I say mistakenly because people often think that the freedom to choose came through the Fall. In believing this they are deceived; choice was already within God’s good plan. What came through the Fall was not the freedom to choose but rather the slavery to having to continually decide between good and evil; and what is more, to be now deciding from a compromised position of “un-freedom” a position of active, egocentric rebellion.

In the light of this perspective, freedom, as it was known in the garden, has been lost. No longer is man free to become what he ought - he has lost the ability to please God. This is so because he has already chosen to adopt a rebellious stance. He can no longer do “good” works. This is truly a Fall, although it would emphasise the active nature of the decision of we called it a Dive.

We need to appreciate the situation in which we are now to be decisive. Under the conditions which prevail now, after the Fall, if we are going to decide for what is “good”, then we must be certain that we cannot do it without God’s help. Under such a bondage of our will we need to be set free before we can then, under the power of the liberation of Christ’s work for us, operate decisively for that which is good.

## *16 – Deciding and Acting: habits, reflex actions, motives.*

*[i] Act implies prior decision*

There is an important spiritual principle that may be extracted from appreciating how God

has made us. It is that when a person acts, we can be certain that they have decided to act. This means that you can tell a person's commitments of will by simply observing what they, in fact, do.

Notice that in saying this about the decisiveness of action, we are in no way saying that actions declare a person's motive. What they do show is that a decision has been made - and this is very helpful. It reveals what a person has committed himself to in the past and the present. Later, we shall develop this insight into a tool for the understanding where we, ourselves, are in positions of safety or of compromise.

### *[ii] Habits*

It is important to bear in mind that sometimes a person's decision to act may be taken a long while before the moment you observed. In this way, we might say that they are pre-committed to acting in such and such a way. For, in the moment, they may not be able to recall that they decided to do such and such. But, in fact, they have arrived at that moment, already decided, perhaps from experiences and commitments in the past. In this way, we have a basis for understanding habitual actions - and yet can still see a basis to change and to turn our lives around.

### *[iii] Trained actions*

Another situation where a person often says that they have not decided to act is in what they might call reflex actions. So, it is true, for the pianist to say, who plays the scale or the arpeggio quickly in the midst of a piece of music, that he is not, at that time, deciding on every note he plays. Yet, it is true that behind that reflex position is the wilful decision made at some time in the past to practise doggedly to get that hand to move that way. This is important in understanding many situations where people say that they do not think about their actions. They may simply be pointing to such reflex actions. If they don't understand that in the past, they have made the decision and sustained it then they may be confused. Indeed, they may even see it as a grounds to deny their responsibility.

You can apply this approach to your own life. Where you have forgotten the immediate context in the past and yet, knowing that you have done such and such, you can change your mind about the commitment to act that way.

This is so helpful once we know that God is not counting our sins against us. For, we might not be able to recall when it was that we decided to live in a certain way, or for what reason, or under whose influence. But we can know that we have decided to do so because of the evidence that we have done it.

This allows us to admit responsibility to God and repent of our former deeds and then to go

on and renounce that way of living. This leads to a freedom from guilt and also the changed position of no longer standing committed to living that way.

### *17 – Matters we must accept and things we may decide.*

*See #2009.02 The Beginning, part 20*

The teaching contained in the Bible is, that, when God made the earth, and after making the man and the woman in His own image, he called them to exercise an authority over the earth and the animals [See #2009.02 The Beginning 20]. This authority over the rest of the earthly creatures is one of the relations God has called us to exercise. We need to accept this relation and embrace it so that we can learn all that it means.

The man and the woman are placed among the rest of creatures . They are not only within the created world; they are also set over it. Being created last conveys the very impression that they are granted the world - it is there for them.

#### *[i] Things we must do and things we may do: freedom within form*

Notice, in passing, that we have here the starting point for our thinking about necessity and freedom. The description of the spatial relation tells us about the objective and fixed nature of the situations that surround man. About these he has no choice. For a man it is necessary that he accepts that he is a creature, he is not free to be otherwise; he finds himself in a garden, in a world, with a neighbour, etc.

Yet, within these objective necessities he exercises a personal-relational freedom, typified here by the authority relation. This freedom is actually operated by his subjective interaction with God, his neighbours and the rest of creation. Here he may exercise his will. This is the situation under which all human beings live - constantly finding themselves presented with objective positions they must occupy of necessity and, at the same time, having personal choice and the exercise of will.

The point for us at the moment is that the decision to act in the proper way that God appointed is the place of obedience. It will be important to understand these starting points or relations - for they are the way God has set things up. We neglect them to our own hurt. Sometimes, we find ourselves fighting the way God has set things up to be - in which case, the better informed we are about the mind of God in the first place, the more it will help us to understand how we can realise the truth and then submit to it. In this way we bring God pleasure and we are much more effective - for we are co-operating with God.

And really, this is often all that is required in ourselves to change in order to experience the full power of what God Himself already has ready for us. So often people think that what they need is a new endowment of power - when really what they need is to understand the

way of laying hold of things which are already potentially true for them, and at the same time getting rid of blocks which are holding back the flow of God's activity within them.

## *18 – Confusion about deciding*

There are many people today who have come to the conclusion, on the basis of their experience, that they cannot make some decisions. This usually is focussed in some particular area of their life.

This confusion can take two forms:

(a) They would say that their experience is "I have decided that before, but I cannot carry it out." This is a confusion between the decision itself and the power to execute what they have, in fact, decided

(b) Or, sometimes people say, "I have decided this before but it made no difference". They have confused the decision with the result.

In both situations, what they really mean is that they have decided in the past, but the decision which they have made has not made any difference. They can in fact make a decision, but they have also, on the basis of their experience, accepted another one - which is that the decision made or not doesn't matter, so why bother? For that area of their life they often give up on deciding. But this is really an attempt to live in a way other than we have been made.

## *19 – When we decide, in advance, to be passive*

Others have often reached the answer that they cannot decide because they have, in fact, already made a decision. It was the decision to be passive about anything, or some particular persons or matters, which comes their way.

In an extreme case, this passivity can manifest over all the exchanges of a person's life. But usually, it manifests in a more focussed area. Passivity does not manifest an inability to decide. Rather, it indicates that a prior decision has already been made. Passive people are really highly decisive people.

## *20 – Double mindedness James 1.5-8*

It is possible for a human being to commit to two matters, which are mutually exclusive, at the same time. This often leads to helplessness which may end in confusion. It is a place where we are unable to ask things of God with faith - for we are committed to both mutually exclusive ways.

When the choice is to relate to a truth or a lie, then the way out is to definitely renounce the lie which is not true. This closes the will to that matter. Then to embrace the truth fully as a clear decision, this gives one a healthy single-mindedness.

Notice that what is involved here is not a fearful narrow-mindedness. Rather, it is a disciplined, steady mind, that is called for in the Christian. A mind which, having once understood that 'two and two make four', doesn't then open itself willingly, to another alternative. This is to commit to a quite proper intolerance of lies.

## 5 – Relational Issues

The Creator, creates, relates and names His creatures. Humans are made to be addressed by God and can respond – this is a blessing of God to them. God, out of His own inner life, wills to create and to have relationships outside of the Trinity. He makes us for His Son and first addresses us as being "in" His Son, before we were made.

Angelic creatures carry out the will of God. Satan rebelled, making an improper response to God. Judged and demoted, Satan, in a hardened way, rebelliously tempts the earth's ruling humans who are made in God's image. As the humans accede to temptation, they enter into a knowing of good and evil – a place of decision "between" two alternatives.

### *21 - Created things and persons are set in relation*

*See # 2009.02 The Beginning part 10*

The first chapter of the Bible focuses our attention on God Himself as the Creator of all that there is and, in particular, what is visible to the men and women of the earth. We learn Who is responsible for the heavens and the earth. We also see that we are either dealing with God or some creature, which He has made. There is no third kind of reality presented to us.

[We need to remember this when we encounter the fantasies and imaginings of our own human origin. They are not objectively real [made by God]; they are subjectively "real to us" in our own warped way of knowing things. Genesis 3 will give us a way to think about this warping.]

[i] God creates by way of his Word; we see that He speaks to create [#2009.02 part 14]. The Word of God is His agent of creation. What ever this Word brings into existence is "good"; which is to say it is of God. It is an expression of what He meant it to be, and that is



how it comes perfectly into being.

[ii] God relates things one to another by his Word. Sometimes, His Word is a separating of things from one another [Genesis 1.4,7,14,] - in this way, there is a distinguishing of things. It indicates that He has a difference in His mind which will be the basis for us to come to know the differing glory of each created thing. Sometimes, it is a setting of things into relation to one another. These basic relations allow us to see what it is that God intends that they should do in respect of one another [#2009.02 parts 15-17].

[iii] God also names things by his Word. This glory is expressed in His "calling" them by a name [1.5,8,10]. To name something is to state what it is in your own mind - it is to state what it shall do, how it will relate to other things. It is to distinguish it so that, in relating to other creatures, its glory may be seen.

[iv] When God comes to the creation of man, there is a conversation within the Trinity of the Godhead. This is a different, less direct, use of the Word of God. Instead of simply commanding "Let there be", there is "Let Us.." [#2009.02 Pages 21-23].

This alerts us that the creation of man will be something which They will do, as three Persons in one Godhead. So it is said that mankind is made in the image of God, after their likeness. How the Godhead is, will somehow be expressed through created humans [#2009.02 page 21].

Within the Godhead, they have a separate relation to one another and so each must have a Name in a relation to one another. Each Person in the Godhead has a distinct glory, which must be expressed in their way of relating to one another. This will mean one initiating and another submitting to that movement. This displays the governance which can operate between One another.

But the conversation "Let us.." introduces something else, other than what we have seen God do in his creating, relating, and naming sequence so far. The conversation tells us that mankind is made to be addressed by God, and is made to know God "face to face" [as an I-You relation], just as there is a talking to one another and knowing of one another in God.

When mankind is made there is to be a plurality, there are two personal forms, male and female [#2009.02 Part 23]. This will imply that the likeness of God can only be seen in the relating of more than one person to another - as it is in the Godhead. There will be a Lover and Beloved. There will be an expression of love, which will answer one to another and there will be one who Mediates that love between the one to the other.

In relation to the rest of the created world, men and women are to rule it, to govern it. They are to govern in the heavens as far as the creatures of the earth fly. It is not said that the gov-

ernment of the heaven where God dwells or the heaven [mid heaven] where traditionally, in the Hebrew way of thinking, the angelic spirits are. This is extended to mankind to rule. They may also eat the plants of the world for food.

[v] Unlike the rest of creation, man, as made in the image of God, can be addressed and spoken to - so they may be blessed. The Blessing takes the form of command. The command is to do what God has made them to do and also equipped them to do by the gift of their creation - the gift precedes the command. It is always so with God. If the man and the woman obey this blessing-command, they shall know in their experience the blessing. They are to be fruitful, to multiply, fill the earth and to subdue it. They are to rule the other creatures. So, as to authority, they are the top of the heap, the pinnacle of creation. When God came to make man, He had a discussion within the Godhead. He said, "Let Us make man in our image". This "Us" is crucial to the understanding of who we are; and how we shall live the very life that God lives.

## 22 - All that was made by God was for His Son

*"For He [the Father] delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things hold together."*

*Colossians 1.13-17 NASV*

It is not until the word of God becomes flesh that we see the Person of the Father revealed in and through His Son, the God-Man. Jesus of Nazareth is the incarnate Word of God - He is God come to us as man. We learn from the New Testament that He is the real man for whom the created world was made. He is not only the One *through* whom it was made, but that all things were created *for* Him also.

This means that, in the original plan of God, He did not create as influenced by any impetus or motive outside of His own life. Creation is solely an inner matter within the Godhead; having its meaning in His life shared with His Son by the Spirit. All that is, including ourselves, was created for Someone else's benefit - for the Son of God. Here we learn that the Father never does anything for Himself, in some self-referred way. As we shall see, that is a way of thinking which has come to us because we are rebels.

The meaning of our coming into being is found in Someone outside of ourselves - it is for Jesus, the Son of God, that we live and have our being. He was the Person through Whom and for Whom we were created; and through Whom and for Whom we were also redeemed

and created anew. We would never have been if the Father had not created us for Him. This is true both for our original creation and our new creation.

We must accept that in being God's creatures, we are not only dependant upon Him for life itself, but that the meaning of our existence is anchored in the Father's creation of us for His Son. Our being is with reference to Another. Originally, as creatures, our existence was always relationally conditioned from outside of us.

### *23 - A rebellious, angelic creature was the source of temptation to men and women.*

*See #2009.06 Having Fallen Part 1*

Angelic beings are spirits who carry out God's commands with regard to men and women. Because they relate to God this way, they understand Him, or they take knowledge of Him, experiencing him as Commander. He initiates, they obey; and they are given power to do so. This also means that they are used to relating in hierarchies themselves, also based upon commanders and obeyers. This is the angelic order. This is their relational and operational glory.

Whenever obedient angels speak to men and women in a way which God authorises, they convey his blessing and they serve us. In the case of evil angels however, we need to be careful. They sound as if they understand us and are like us. This is true in that they are personal and responsible. But they are not ordered as we are. They are not made in the image of God as men and women are - it is never said that an angel "loves" God.

Whilst there is personal communication between us and God through their agency, we never see in the Bible that the good angels speak as from themselves, but always in the name of the One who sent them. They make that clear and up front - for they are the executives of Another.

Satan's rebellion is not that he wants power to act, he has that - but that he wants to take God's place in their relation together. He wants to be the Commander, and not the obedient one. He wants to initiate, not follow. He wants control of the process, not simply the execution of it.

This is very important to understand. For it gives us a clear understanding of what it means for us to know good and evil as we learned it from obeying Satan's suggestions as he rebelliously took the initiative with us.

## 24 - The knowledge of "good and evil"

#2009.06 Having Fallen Part 1, 6

In that we are made to share the life of God, then we are, by creation, in a place where the way of knowing a person is by sharing their life. The first step of any knowing for a human being is to start with knowing, and attending to, someone else. We can only experience ourselves as in relation to others. And since we are made to know God, then we are only able to take knowledge of a person by being in relation to them. This means by responding to them and their initiatives.

But what is important in the matter is to understand that you cannot take their part in the relation - you can never relate to them as they are relating to you, you cannot get inside their skin. They are them, you are you.

With God this is vital, for it means that we can never take His part. We can never initiate in our relating to Him. He has not arranged matters so that we can know Him that way. If we tried to do that then we would be knowing good and evil, like God does. We would be the source of what is and therefore, what isn't. We would be the initiators of what life is about - and that is to attempt to take His place in the relation which He created between us.

This is what it means to say that we have eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil - we have ingested its fruit as that which we think will sustain us. But such a belief must mean "sustain" without reference to God. We have moved out of order with God, tried to take His place in our relations to Him - we have copied Satan, and so have exchanged fathers. For to copy is to respond to an initiative by imitation - and this is what sons do with their fathers - says Jesus to the Pharisees, "you are of your father the devil" [John 8.44].

## 6 – Holiness arises in an exclusive, permanent & totally engaging relationship

### 25 - To share God's life is to be holy as He is holy.

See Leviticus 19.1-4, Numbers 15.38-40, 1 Peter 1.13-21, Hebrews 1.1-4; 12.4-11.

There is nothing more fundamental in practical knowledge of God than to comprehend and practice our life in response to His call to be holy, because He is holy. There are a cluster of ideas that are found in the Bible which are all associated with holiness. If we can get some idea of what it means to say that God is holy, and so that He calls Israel to holiness with Him we shall begin to see how to understand joy, honour, intimacy, defilement,

There are a number of passages in the Bible which will repay study about the understanding of holiness. In this chapter we look at some central ones of the Old and New Testament.

## *26 - Looking at God's word, spoken, written and incarnate.*

If He has made us in His image, then we answer to Him. But we are biased, or bent, coloured by our sin. If we look within ourselves to see what God is like we shall always be making Him in our image. Answers from within ourselves, relying on our self-knowledge, are neither reliable nor true.

However, by the Holy Spirit, we are helped to see the revelation of God. So we can look at the word of God He has spoken and caused to be written for us. This was first spoken through His prophets and is found in the holy and wonderful Law of the Lord.

We can also look at the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the express image of the invisible God [Colossians 1.15]. For God has now spoken definitively through His Son [Hebrews 1.1-4]. It is this last and definitive Word of God which ushers in "the last days" in which we live. It is by His incarnation as the very Word of God, his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, we shall see expressed to us the holy love of God. The heart of the Father shall be seen through the life of the Son. We can observe how the Son relates to the Father. In this way we receive a revelation of what goes on between them.

## *27 - Holy love of God.*

We now turn to a passage of Scripture found in the Law - what the Hebrews called the Torah. It concerns a series of requirements which God makes upon His covenant people Israel; on the basis that they should live a certain way because God lives a certain way - they should be holy because He is holy. Notice that we are not trying to copy God's part in this, we are not Him, we do not do his part.

Rather, we are looking at the passage to see what it is that He has asked them to do to express, for their part, what it will be to be holy. If Jesus will set before us what holy love is between His Father and Himself - we need to know what sort of love is holy love. If we don't understand that, we shall make serious mistakes - for we shall make love to mean what we think it means and that will lead us into error, for we are prone to that. Further, if we want to understand why the cross is a revelation of the Love of God, we shall have to see what holy love is like. For that is the love which is shown there. Consequently, to enquire of this holy love sets us up for the understanding of the cross of Jesus.

*"You shall be holy, because I am holy" [Leviticus 19.1-4, Numbers 15.38-40, 1 Peter 1.13-21].*

*"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2] 'Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. [3] Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths, I am the LORD your God. [4] 'Do not turn to idols or make for yourself molten gods; I am the LORD your God.'"*

## *28 - To express holiness requires more than one person.*

It is about persons in relation; it requires that "you shall be " a certain way, because "I am".

*[1] A holy God is a commanding, initiating God,*

Whenever we hear such words as these; "You shall be...because I am.." we are listening to an authoritative voice which is coming from a Person who understands that their life has become the foundation of our life. Who they are, rightly, sets the nature of things as they will be between us and them.

It is a voice of One Who understands that we are His creatures, made in His image and likeness and that by order of creation we shall be as our Maker is and respond to Him as He requires.

The Lord speaks of Himself as "holy". That is, as God knows Himself and He wants Israel to be as He is. This text in Leviticus will not open for us the inner relations of the holy Trinity. We shall have to wait for the incarnation for that. He does not immediately state what it means for Himself in the Godhead, this revelation is contained in Jesus, His Son. He, by his life and ministry, will open a door for us into the workings of the Trinity, of the Persons of the Godhead, which will make clear for us what it is for God to be holy.

We also see that it is God who makes us holy; we never do it for ourselves [Leviticus 20.7-8; 22.32]. That is, by His action of addressing us, He sets us into relation to Himself.

God may use his agents [Exodus 29.1] to sanctify or hallow someone or something; but even so, it is still His word alone is ultimately the source of that hallowing.

*[2] Holiness for the personal creature is obedience to that voice.*

In the context of Leviticus 19.1-4, if Israel obeys this word, they have already expressed the holiness which He seeks from them. They are responding to him as He wishes.

Holiness, then, is activated in relation, you do not learn by thinking about it. You can know it only in the doing of it - by obeying what is said. It is as if God had said, "I will show you what it is for Me to be holy, by giving you a series of commands which, if you obey them, you will

express, in your part as a creature, what it is to be holy, as I am." Do not miss here the giving of command and the requirement to obey; for, in the life of the creature, obedience is the essence of a holy relationship. That is what God states for Israel will be what it means to be holy as He is.

*[3] This will mean that there is command and obedience in the Godhead as well.*

As we shall see, there is command and obedience in God. Such reciprocal relating [answering to one another] shows clearly the one expression of holiness.

*29 - Leviticus 17.1-4 also gives us the following clues.*

*[1] Holiness is found in the relations between persons.*

It is expressed through having a total preoccupation with another than self - it is an exclusive focus. It will express itself in submissive honouring which issues in obedience.

Here, in Leviticus, we see that Israel is addressed by One who states that His relation to them is that He is "the Lord, their God". This is a relation between God and the whole of Israel. The commands which He gives them indicate what it will be for them to be holy as He is. This should begin to speak to us about the nature of the holiness which is found within the Godhead, in whose image we are made [Genesis 1.26].

*[2] "Every one of you will reverence his mother and his father".*

Using a basic image, He directs that for them to be holy in relation to Him, they shall be directed to think of themselves as children in relation to their parents. In this way, early in Israel's history, God expresses the bedrock of His relation to them as parental.

Finally through his Son, we have it powerfully stated that God is to us a Holy Father. But we shall be led to understand "father" in a way that God has given it a particular meaning which fills.

How the human creatures relate to their parents shows something God can use to express to us the holiness of the Godhead. That there is reverencing between children and parents, implies that there must be reverencing of the same sort in the Godhead.

If there is reverencing [honouring], it will involve a total preoccupation with the will of another - as children must find with parents. Total preoccupation with another's will inevitably finishes in obedience.

It will have to be exclusive of others in this respect. Parents and children have an exclusive relationship. These things must happen in the Godhead - and wherever human beings are

exclusive in their relationships, either to God or man, then they are mirroring what it is to say that God is holy.

All humans, in having parents, move through two stages of relating to them. In both stages, their attitude is to reverence them.

This is a permanent matter between children and parents. When they are small children, whose consciences are being formed by their parents, they are learning to adopt the values and moral choices of their parents, whose task is to form them to be like them. In this phase they are learning, being disciplined, and they are in submission to their elders. They draw their life from their parents. All that the parents have is theirs to give to their children.

When children are grown up, they are sons or daughters. When a child becomes a mature son, it is spiritual coming of age.

How Christ brings us as children of God to a mature sonship is expressed by Paul in Galatians 4.1-7.

That is, they express their reverence, their honouring, in that they think like their parents, they do not depart from their ways. What their parents have joy in, they do; they take pleasure in the same things. It may be said that they “keep” to the way of life their parents had before the children came.

So, the children grow up to become as their parents, sharing their life fully, working with their parents they share their substance with them. It is the experience of a shared life which has come to mean shared joy. It has been founded upon, from the sons and daughters side, a submission manifested in obedience as an expression of honour and reverence.

When the parents commend their children, it is an honour to the sons and daughters, for such honour can only come to them from the parents. Parents look to see their children honoured in their society as the parents are honoured themselves - they look to share their honour [glory] with their children.

*[3] The holiness of God is expressed by the relations within the Godhead. It is the relation of a Holy Father with an obedient Son.*

The holy life within the Godhead is expressed by its most powerful revelation through the Incarnation. For there is the Son, who said that his Father was greater than He. Indeed the Son's greatness among men was to be seen in that His Father was greater than He. The Father was always the Father, the Son always the Son. But the Son does not live by His own power, like the Father does. All that is the Son's is the Father's, for the Father has given it to the Son.

The Son relates to the Father as an obedient Son, who does not do anything except what He sees his Father doing. He has a total preoccupation with the will of the Father - He has yield-



ed his own will voluntarily to Another. If there is any honour for the Son, it will come from the Father; and the Son looks only to the Father for such honour. He is exclusive of others in this respect - He is not looking for honour from any other than the Father. There is no one, among men, that the Son commits Himself to for commendation - He is exclusively relating to the Father. He has reserved Himself for His approval alone.

The Father has given all honour to the Son - and eventually this glory of the Father will be seen as attending the Son.

The Holy Spirit of God mediates between the Father and the Son. He, in a self effacing way, conveys to the Father the love of the Son and He conveys to the Son the honour and esteem of the Father. He is exclusive in His submission to them both in the service of their relationship together.

When the Lord takes on human flesh, He is submissive to the Spirit of God as the Spirit of His Father. When the Lord ascends and is exalted by the Father, the Spirit of the exalted Son serves the Son as He conveys to us all that the Son gives Him to tell us. "Command" and "obedience" are both found in the Godhead; both are expressions of the shared holiness of God.

*[4] God expresses his holy life in that, when He does distinctive acts.*

He asks us to have these distinctions in our life as well. In this way we are to be holy as He is; we have a life like His.

In the creation of the world, God ceased after six days and rested on the Sabbath. In the life of God, there is a "hallowing" [sanctifying] of one day from another six. He set it apart from the other days of work. It is a distinction of one day from others because it is the life of God expressed in doing something different. Notice that God does not rest on it because it is a Sabbath; it is a Sabbath because God rested on that day as distinct from working. In addressing Israel about the Sabbath, He calls it "my Sabbath" because it issues from His life; and so should be found in theirs.

We see more of these distinctions God asks Israel to express:

[a] He has set her apart from all the nations of the earth in that He has made a distinction between her and other nations [Exodus 19.4-6]. She is to think and act in the light of this distinction.

[b] Moses is not to approach the burning bush as some ordinary ground he has constantly walked over with his shoes on; this is holy ground. A distinction is made between it and other ground for God is doing something unique here [Exodus 3.5].

This is also true for distinctive places which are to be remembered for what God did at each place. For example, Gilgal and Ebenezer are holy places because He requires a memorial to

be set up. Sometimes, God takes Israel back to a place where He disciplined her to say other things to her [Hosea 1.10].

Indeed, it is this understanding of “holy places” which motivates Peter at the Mount of Transfiguration, for he recognises that something is happening here which is unique, holy, part of the revelation of the life of God. He wants to commemorate the place but instead of that he is directed, by the Voice from heaven, to consider not the place or the moment but the Person of Jesus, as the embodiment of what God is doing.

[c] There is holy oil for the anointing of the priests which is not to be mixed in the proportions given for common use [Exodus 30.24-33, 34-37.] God marks the differences between some acts of anointing and others. For example, there is oil for authorisation and blood for cleansing and hallowing something or someone.

[d] Agents used for the hallowing of things and persons.

Oil as the consecrating agent for ordering something altar, tabernacle, Aaron, needing to have authority to do it. [Exodus 30.24-37 Lev. 8.10-12].

Blood is the agent for consecrating a thing, to make atonement for it. ie it removes defilement prior to use.

Passover was a separation of them, [a judgement which made a distinction between Israel and Egypt Exodus 11.7] before He could use them. The blood made them consecrated so that He could use them.

Person who would administer this consecration was a Priest [Ex 28.30-38] - for the holy Priest Aaron [type of Christ] would

[a] carry the judgement of the sons of Israel over his heart before the Lord continually

[b] take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel were to consecrate. There was need for the atonement to consecrate them because they were dwelling among a sinful people [Lev 16.15-19 for the holy place, and then Lev 16.20-28 for the people].

[d] This difference between the sacred and the profane, the clean and the unclean, is to mark a difference between the God-given meaning of a thing and its common use. It signifies a difference which has its origin in what God does in one place as from another. To profane a holy thing is to treat it as something which is not different - it is to fail to preserve in our life the distinction in the holy life of God which that difference was given to express. When we use words like hallowing, sanctifying, viewing something as sacred, then we are distinguish-

ing things as set apart, and different from other things. Simply on the basis that God has made that difference real to us because of what He has done, or that He simply wishes us to treat it so.

*[5] Holy love has an obedience expressed by holding to a shared, intimate life. Intimacy is unexpressed where there is no holy command and no voluntary obedience; where there is no thing we do which is exclusive of others.*

Holiness involves keeping “My” Sabbaths. That is because they are “my” sabbaths for God, they are “holy” sabbaths for Israel [Exodus 16.22-30].

This is a requirement placed upon Israel to take the way of life which has been given them from God, instituted for them from his own will.

They are to keep it because they are to be as He is - it is something of the pattern in the life of God which was conveyed to them for their good. It is good for them because it comes from Him, who is good. And they are to keep it, which means to do it.

In this way, the Sabbath issue is not just some rule that they are to obey - it is a share in the lifestyle of God which they are to enjoy. They are to “keep” it because they recognise that it is unique because it came from Him. It is to be kept because they value whatever is from the life of their God. It is something He has shared of His life with us by making it known.

This insight is fundamental to the difference of living by law and by grace. It is vital to see that if we see God as a moral Governor and Law giver, then we shall simply deal in laws and their penalties. We shall have separated the law from the Lawgiver – making the law external to the relationship we have with Him. To do this is to never know the intimacy to which He invites through the revelation of Himself and the holy Love which is his Life.

Holiness, from God’s side, is about holding to the life of God as something uniquely shared between us and Him. It is a form of obedience based upon knowing who He is and that His love to us, in sharing His life, is a blessing to be held and kept. The Sabbath is not divorced from His Person; it is significant because it is “His” Sabbath.

Holiness, from our side, is about treasuring the things of God as given to us by Himself and given because we are in relationship of love and shared life. Such things are to be kept, treasured, valued and maintained because they are abiding in the life of God as shared. This is an obedience offered because we understand the value of having been uniquely invited into sharing the life of God; keeping “his” Sabbaths is the obedience of a shared intimacy.

Needless to say, this intimacy is seen in the life of the Son of God whilst upon the earth. His life of prayer expresses this matter clearly, as does his obedience which shows a sure and personal knowledge of the will of the Father. No wonder that, in His relation to us, He understood our friendship and intimacy with Himself in terms of obedience to His command. [John

15.9-16] Keeping Jesus' commandments is simply to abide in His love. Both obedience to Him as Lord and prayer to the Father in secret are intimate [holy] actions.

*[6] Holiness is being exclusively reserved for another who will jealously have no rivals.*

*"Do not turn to idols..."*

The other statements of this passage speak of the positive matters of holiness which require obedience and reflect actions in the life of God which He shares with us about what He is like. So it is true to say that it never occurs in the holy life of God that there is anyone else who is as He is in Himself. What does not occur in the life of God is not to be done by Israel for it would not be true. If there is no God other than God, then they must never act in their life as if there were. To admit into the relationship any rival to God would be to act in such a way as not to be holy as He is holy.

When God speaks of himself as Holy, He means that the life offered as shared in intimacy with Himself to which no other than Himself will be admitted to by Israel. However, there is something else as well. He does not mean that we are equal in this partnership; as if we could bring along someone else to enter the life shared. Co-operation for Israel is not contribution; Israel is not to turn to others that are presented to her as gods. He makes clear that He is one who, in taking the initiative and having shared his life with Israel, has taken her in covenant relationship. Then He is her Lord, and her God. Then there will be no others for her. There aren't any others really, but she must not act as if there are for her. Not only is it to exchange worthless tinsel for real gold, it is a defilement of the relation between God and Israel.

*"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep my commandments." [Exodus 20.5-6]*

The Lord expresses this exclusiveness by speaking of Himself as a jealous God; by which He means that when other rivals are admitted into the holy life which He and Israel share [usually as the "gods" of other nations] then their holiness is threatened with defilement – made common. In such a case, His jealousy is aroused and He fights for the unimpaired, exclusive relationship with his people.

Such a disorder could only come about through Israel admitting another rival. But since there are no other gods in fact, it is not the "rival" which God overthrows with His jealousy. Rather, such jealousy usually expresses itself in discipline upon Israel itself. God, you see, is concerned pre-eminently for their holy life together - it is the preservation of that which is

uppermost in His Mind.

Usually, that discipline meant handing over Israel to the peoples, who worship the other "gods" and then delivering her from them when her chastisement was over. This action vindicated God's holiness and truth. It also showed caring love to Israel as that of a holy husband [Hosea 2.14-23], who does not seek her destruction but her return to Him.

As He has shown in his dealing with the OT church, so with us today. God deals with us as sons. He disciplines us so that we may share His holiness [Hebrews 12.4-11].

When it says above that God "visits" the sins of the fathers to further generations it means that they turn up in their lives as visitors who arrive; they simply are manifest there. This "visiting" is the Lord's doing and is, at the same time, a powerful confirmation of His pattern for fathers and children. Under holy life, children are to honour their parents by obeying them and so will end up copying them. Then the same order of God operates in rebellion of the father, for there will be a natural consequence to the immediate son and then by him to the third and fourth generation.

Notice the strong language of "hate" and "love" spoken to Israel. God does not speak in this way to other nations. Such strong language is the way holiness expresses its absolute nature when it will brook no rivals. It is language of holy jealousy rising up to hold on to what it sees is life threatening. [See the same strong language in the jealous, primary, requirement of the Lord in respect of other close, holy relationships - "Except you hate your father and mother you cannot by my disciple..."]

Our Lord expressed this truth in his relation to the Father when He made it clear that He did not receive glory from men; there was One who glorified Him, and that was the Father [John 5.37,41,44]. He would not allow others to commend Him other than His Father, nor praise Himself in way which detracted from the glory of his Father ["No one is good except God."]

*[7] For a jealous God then, sin is unfaithfulness, and it kills the holy life shared. It is defiling.*

It is against this picture of jealousy that the understanding of "any of the sins of mankind" done by any member of the house of Israel are seen as unfaithfulness to the Lord [Numbers 5.6-10]. This powerful picture is exemplified in the coming of the spirit of jealousy over a husband in regard to his wife he suspects of being unfaithful. [Numbers 5.11-31]. This picture of the Lord's people as being in a relation to Him as a bride to her husband is used in the Old and New Testaments.

It is for this reason that God acts jealously. It is His reaction to unfaithfulness which threatens the shared life of God and his people. This is why disobedience brings death as a consequence. We understand here that "death" means the interruption of the life of God which is

shared with His people. It is for this reason that when we sin, we feel in our experience, that God is far away. We often interpret that experience to mean that He has left us. The truth is the reverse, we have broken fellowship and sweet communion; He has remained faithful to the relation, for He is holy, He cannot help Himself but be true to it. Sin has brought death into the relating. Our conscience registers this, for it speaks to us about the state of a relationship.

Death then, is the consequence of sin. It is so because sin is the disobedience which refuses to enact the holy, exclusive intimate life of God and His people. In this way, we see that death results from sin long before the Law comes in under Moses [Romans 5.12-13]; the Law came in simply to increase the trespass [Romans 5.20,7.7-11].

Indeed, to Adam, the Lord made clear that the day that he ate of the tree which God said he should not, he would surely die. As we saw, it did not mean that he dropped dead physically, it meant much more than that. It meant that he died to God - he exchanged fathers, taking Satan as his father, to copy, to obey, to treat as god, [John 8.40-44] and, in this way, Satan became the god of this world. The world, in this sense of the word, is a regime of rebels who have turned their backs on God and are hostile in their minds against Him and committed to deeds which make Him very angry.

*[8] Holiness is about adherence to the truth of the word of God.*

*"...or make for yourselves molten gods".*

This jealousy of God is not based upon simply a proprietary spirit - it is simply true that He alone is God. Other rivals, such as Israel might come upon in the nations round about are not gods at all [1 Corinthians 8.4-6].

So it not only violates the covenant with Him, it offends his honour and the truth of the matter in hand. For to have Israel actually try and fashion Gods from her own hands, by melting down metal so as to worship it - is to dishonour her God who has laid bare his life in revelation to her, shared with her the revelation of Himself.

The word of God is as God to us - for it is his communication of His life to us. This means that to know the Holy Father is to enter into sonship expressed by obeying the truth; for the very definition of the truth is that it is the word from a holy Creator, who shares His life with his creatures. To have His word abiding in us is to be living according to the holiness constitutes the relation between us and Him - this is to know the truth.

To make gods for ourselves is to spurn the revelation as something not true in itself, nor as the source of all truth in this life. To make an idol treats the relationship with the Lord as something which may be set aside. It is a departure from the truth. And it is recognisably a "departure"; for she is in possession of the truth by the revelation of the life of God given to

her as the LORD.

*30 - Holiness in God shown in purity - no mixture of contrary things. The maintenance of purity of holiness leads to prohibiting some things.*

*See 1 John 1.5; James 1.13*

Further on in the section of Leviticus 19 we have been studying, we see this instruction of God to not have mixture expressing itself in the life of Israel. So the prohibitions of God are there to serve the maintenance of the holy life - they are warnings of what is contrary to that life, and so must not be mixed with it.

They are not to carry the eating of a peace offering to the lord beyond two days [Leviticus 19.5-8]. In this way the eating of the peace offering is not found merging into the normal eating of life, that is, eaten as something which you do everyday. That would mean to make it common.

There shall be no harvesting of the corners of the field, no second going over of the vineyard for the fallen fruit - these are not part of the harvest, but are left for the stranger among them. No mixing of these two actions is allowed [Leviticus 19.9-10]

In regards to neighbour, there is to be no stealing, false dealing, lying, swearing falsely, no withholding wages. No taking of advantage of the handicapped, no partiality, or slander. No hate of fellow countryman in your heart. While he may be reproved, do not sin because of him. Do not take vengeance or bear grudges. All these are actions towards your neighbour which must not be found mixed up in your holy life. [Leviticus 19.11-18].

There shall be no mixture of seeds in a field, breeding between different kinds of cattle, or wearing of garments of mixed material. [19.19] Violations of persons within slavery are not to be treated as violations within freedom; for where full freedom is not known then diminished liability applies - there is to be no confusion or mixture between slave and free. They are not capable of mixture. They are differences which are deep and need to be recognised as different [Leviticus 19.20-22].

Trees of the promised land have been defiled by the worship of the previous inhabitants. Such fruit is compromised, so the command was to wait three years- then the fourth is holy to the Lord, and then eat on the fifth [19.23-26].

Blood, soothsaying, divination, changing hair shape, markin the body, cutting it for the dead - there is to be no mixture of holy life with these practices [19.27-28]

No making of your daughter a harlot, no seeking mediums or spiritists - these will defile you. Keep honest balances and weights. [29-36].

These matters tell us is that if people did them, and admitted such mixture into their life then they would reap an immediate harvest in their own personal experience. They would be defiled in their wonderful life which they share with the Lord. They would reap in their own persons the due penalty of their error [Romans 1.27].

Notice that this does not tell us something which is related to law primarily, but which is related to life and so related to law . We are already back behind the law here - for the laws of God are simply God speaking His Mind - we must not think of them any other way. That is, the statutes of God are simply what he requires for us to share his holy life, and His prohibitions are what we must not admit into that life as anything which He tells us defiles it.

The death penalty then is not some arbitrary, imposed punishment for a crime, it is a result of an action [eg murder], the nature of which is itself a rejection of the life of God so total as to be a forfeiture of life itself. [Genesis 9.6]. It is a requirement of God, for it denies the very making of a man in the image of God - and what is made in the image of One, that One will defend as Himself.

## 7 – Holiness and the death of Christ

*31 - Sin as a foreign invasion into God's own holiness, His sovereignty and world.*

To understand the holiness of God is to know and accept that He commands and we obey - this is the way of the holy relationship in which we are set. For us, obedience to God is our expression of holiness within the covenant, and so it recognises that He is the Head and takes the initiative whilst we respond to that leading, and follow in submission to His will.

In this way we can appreciate that sin, the power which entered the world, is an invasion into his headship and authority. Sin defiles as it interferes in the holy relationships of God. Sin is absolutely malignant and hostile to his holiness . There can be no compromise between the holy and the sinful.

Sin is not one of many foes which God has. It is the one central issue upon which God staked his whole campaign with the world. It is the issue at the centre of the cross of Jesus Christ. In this battle, the righteousness of God is either secured or lost to the world and men and women forever.

It seems a contradiction that any power should impose anything on God, but that is what sin actually does through the fact that He has chosen to be our God; it is through our side of that relation that sin entered the world - that is its upstart nature.

For all of God's limitations are those He sets upon Himself; they are self imposed. Sin's limitation on God is not self determined by God and therefore is intolerable. Sin imposes on God; it



is a limitation on God unlike any other. All of sin aims at a destruction of God's joy in life. His holy and eternal life repels it.

*32 - God hates sin because of what it is in itself; not simply for what it does.*

The character of God is conveyed to us in the Bible under the two words love and holiness. God's holiness expresses His love of goodness and also His rejection of sin. The suffering of Christ on the cross for our sins, is intimately connected to His holy life: it is a pure condemnation of evil for what it is, in itself. It is the atonement which will demonstrate God's deep hatred of sin to us. But it is one thing to see that God hates sin; it is another to see why He hates it.

*Let us make a distinction!*

Consider the worldly man, who is strongly influenced by pride and selfishness. He is one who thinks he is of great consequence and of considerable dignity. He will feel insulted when he is disobeyed, and he will rise up against the person who contravenes his demands. Many folks consider, using this model learned from the worldly man, that, in some way like this God has an aversion to sin. So, the thought goes, along the lines that a worldly man has an aversion to anyone who makes light of his authority so we might think that God's aversion to sin is of this kind. This is to argue from the likeness of the broken creature to the likeness of God - it is a fallacious argument.

It is not the case with God. For the atonement will teach us that God hates the evil thing as it is in itself. It is not that there is any ill will directed towards the sinner, or any feeling of revenge, nor is it that God's pride - so to speak - is hurt by it: for there is no pride like this in God.

There will be a revelation of what sin means to God, in the atonement. It is only in the light of the atonement, which God has set forth, apart from the law [Romans 3.23], that we are able to appreciate that the Law of God, when introduced into the world, really increased the trespass and so became the law of sin and death [Romans 8.3]. And, in the light of this use to which sin put the holy law of God, to bring people to death it was seen to be "utterly sinful" [Romans 7.13]. So the nature of sin has been exposed for what it is in itself. As a power using holy and true things to achieve despicable ends.

Such a revelation of the sin's use of law is only able to be seen after the cross has revealed God's judgment of sin [Romans 8.3]. Sin is shown to be sin, from God's side, only in the work of God in which made "Him to be sin who knew no sin," [2 Corinthians 5. 21] that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Where sin has been judged "in the flesh" we are free to see how it has used the Law of God, a holy and wonderful expression of God's mind, as a tool for its own purposes, to bring us to death - in that case it is a revelation of sin *for what it*

*is of itself.*

### *33 - The loving holiness of God reacts to sin by judgment. But in such a way that it is a saving judgment.*

God repels sin by his judgment of it. It is by the Incarnation that God expressed a determination greater than the foreign, invasive, determination of sin. For, in the Incarnation, by taking flesh, God was capable, through His self-emptying in Christ, of expressing a self mastery, through a holy surrender.

*- a death "unto" sin*

The moral effect of this was greater than the alien invasion by sin. God enters the arena of death as a sacrifice that will result in blessing. That is why it is said [Romans 6.10] that Christ died unto sin once. "Unto" because he dies as a self sacrifice of the holy God that will establish his, and God's, righteousness. It is language of sacrifice to die "unto" something - it has a sacrificial end in view. The death which God enters "into" to save us is a powerful exercise of moral strength, which increases life in the losing of it.

*a death "by" sin*

Whereas, by contrast, men and women die by sin. "By" because sin is the agent of death to them - it is the sting of death. Sin is the very source and starting point of which death is the ultimate result [1 Corinthians 15.56-57]. This dying of men and women is to die as under the curse of the results of their actions. The death which is at the command of sin is only that which can bring death, corruption and decay. But the sacrificial death which is at the command of God will bring life.

All sin, in that it is an affront to God's holy life, is met by God with the reaction of judgment. And this reaction is one of loving holiness - and so it is a saving judgment.

God's holiness, seen enfleshed in His Son, dies; but in dying inflicts on sin a death which it has no power to repel. God's moral power, the power of His holiness brought a change in the usage of death itself. It converted death itself from rendering a destructive service for sin to entering the redeeming service of God. God, in Christ, so died that sin lost its chief way of expressing its upstart rule, death. In this way a great reversal took place when God's Christ died. Death became the servant of life; a universal curse has been changed in its usage into a universal blessing.

Sin then, did not cost God his existence, but it cost Him his bliss and pleasure in his headship. It did not take the soul of the Son of God, but it did cost Him all that made life an experience for Him of fullness of joy. It cost Him the Cross; with all that meant for a life such as was His. God, in Christ, so met the one enemy in a way that He turned his one weapon onto himself.

He so understood and penetrated into the meaning of death and sin Himself, that He overcame the last limiting thing to Himself - evil.

And as He saved men and women by that death on the Cross of His Son for ever, so He judged the world there forever. For it is here, at the cross that He bears the judgment of his own holiness. He does this in a way which brings in eternal righteousness; a way which is not surpassed by any sacrifice or suffering which man can endure or find in the world.

In this way God shows Himself to be just and good - He declares his righteousness - in the face of all that is evil and risen up against His goodness. The greatest of all the powers over the world suffered most for the world. For Christ went to the cross as the King of the world. He is not made a King because of it. His cross is a work of power because it is the work of a King. And He did not rise to become a King; He died as a King and rose to be declared that before the whole world. He was declared it by the resurrection out from among the dead because his death had secured the victory of its holy, moral power over sin and its result, death.

*34 - This salvation by judgment is to holiness, it is to be like Him who is the holiness of God.*

*See Campbell [ 1856] pages 114-150*

Our salvation does not take its definition "from" that which we are saved. The main meaning of any salvation is not "from where" you were taken but "to where". We are concerned not with salvation's immediate occasion, but its goal. And our salvation is not a salvation to anything less than to God Himself. It is not a salvation to prosperity, to success, to civilization, to idealism. It is *salvation to intimate life with Himself*. And so it is to his obedience, His kingdom and His rule: it is to be holy as He is holy.

This will mean that when we come to think of the cross of Jesus, we shall not find its main meaning for us in what we are saved "from", but rather to what we are saved to. We shall not major on the retrospective meaning of the atonement; but on its prospective goal. We shall see that its main meaning and focus will be upon to where it is directed.

*35 - God, as a holy Father, restores order in his household by judgment.*

Throughout her covenant relations within God's household, Israel found that God acted as a holy One. When the household was brought into disorder by the action of the disobedient children, He was the one who made a judgment - a decision - and restored order to the household relations. We see that judgment is the business of fathers - and that God does not judge Israel because He has simply decided to do so - He does so because He is a covenant-

Father.

Whenever a father is not reconciled to the actions of his children, then he shall have to make a judgment of their actions, so that through that judgment he shall come to some reconciliation with their doings. It is their actions that make it impossible for him to be at one with them. It is not that his heart is not for them, it is that he must deal with them in regard to their sin which makes for the difficulty. He can only find reconciliation with them through judgment of their actions. God will deal with them in the light of their deeds. [See Ezekiel 7.27; 9.10; 11.21; 14.23]

For example, Korah thought the whole congregation of Israel was holy [Numbers 16.3]. So, he thought that Moses and Aaron had exalted themselves by carrying out their roles. Moses makes clear that the people of Korah's tribe did have a holy part - and so exclusive of others - to play in the service of the tabernacle [16.8-10]; but that they wanted someone else's work to do. This was essentially coveting some task which the Lord had assigned to another. It was to desire, on the strength of one's own heart, that the allotment of God's choices and divisions were otherwise. Korah didn't accept the limitation of God's order.

God rose up in holy indignation about this and acted by judgement. He saved Israel from the effects of the rebellion in the camp by judgment of the offenders. He restored the challenge to his order, to his holy choices as to how things shall be for Israel. Israel found that, in her life together with God, she was a saved people because she was a judged people. The whole cycle of the book of Judges states this principle over and over again.

He brought reconciliation between Himself and a disordered Israel by judgment. But there was a destruction of persons here involved.

In the cross we shall see that all these elements are also to be found.

*The subject of a salvation by/through judgment is a constant theme all through the Bible.  
See Boan, [2009] "Fifty Readings on Reconciliation".*

## 8 – Selections from P.T. Forsyth

The idea of God's holiness as foundational in all of Forsyth's works but particularly so in two of his books. We introduce two of his works and some quotations from them. These are for your consideration.

Read them through slowly, you may have to read two or three time - I do - to get the full flow of the meaning. Forsyth's word-fall is very different to ours today. But they are worth the struggle, for they are profound and clear ideas.

These readings are not so much important for us now; but when we come to section 3 on the Atonement it opens for us the significant question, "What does the Atonement mean for God? Why is He satisfied with the death of Jesus?" Then we see that the answers to these questions turns on understanding His holiness.

[1] Forsyth, Peter Taylor, [1910], *The Work of Christ*, Hodder and Stoughton

Forsyth had given his Congregational Lecture in 1909 on the Person and Place of Christ. Just after that, in July 1909, Dr. Campbell Morgan held his annual conference, largely of young ministers, at Mundesley, Norfolk, in the UK. Forsyth was the speaker at that Conference. He spoke extempore, working off rough notes. His lectures were taken down in shorthand and were later revised. This book is the result.

[2] Forsyth, Peter Taylor, [1909], *The Cruciality of the Cross*, Hodder and Stoughton

In September 1908 Peter Taylor Forsyth was writing for the Expositor and he was attempting to answer a question. He stated the question like this:

"It is a question which today is often asked how a phrase like "the blood of Christ" could be presented in such ethical terms as to appeal to an age like our own. May I suggest the lines of reply?"

A year later, Forsyth published a book, "The Cruciality of the Cross" Hodder and Stoughton 1909. The fourth chapter of that book was the article he had begun for the Expositor, "much revised, amended and expanded."

It is the flow of the argument of that fourth chapter, entitled "The Moral Meaning of the Blood of Christ" which I have laid out as a series of extended quotations for us to read. It is particularly helpful in that it deals with the nature of sacrifice and, on the way, lays out a thoughtful approach to practical holiness.

### *36 - Holiness of God [taken from the preface of the book itself]*

"That book [ie. the New Testament] represents a grand holiness movement; but it is one which is more concerned with God's holiness than ours, and lets ours grow of itself by dwelling on His. Christianity is concerned with God's holiness before all else; which issues to man as love, acts upon sin as grace, and exercises grace through judgment. The idea of God's holiness is inseparable from the idea of judgment as the mode by which grace goes into action. And by judgment is meant not merely the self judgment which holy grace and love stir in man, but the acceptance by Christ of God's judgment on man's behalf and its conversion in him into our blessing by faith.

By atonement, therefore, is meant that action of Christ's death which has a prime regard to God's holiness, has it for its first charge, and finds man's reconciliation impossible except as that holiness is divinely satisfied once for all upon the cross. Such an atonement is the key to the incarnation. We must take that view of Christ which does most justice to the holiness of God....Christ's first concern and revelation was not simply the forgiving love of God, but the holiness of such love." Forsyth [1909] COC p.5-6

### *37 - Christ as our Representative –*

"He saved us by His difference from us. He did not redeem us because He represented us; rather He represents us because He redeemed. It is true He could not redeem man without representing him. But had He redeemed man by only representing him, man would be self-redeemed in the human classic. It is the atoning death of Christ as the representative of God in man that makes Jesus a complete and closed personality with a final action on the world. It is the offering to God in man of a holiness possible only to God. He died once for all, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us in His finality of God." Forsyth [1909] COC p.85-6.

### *38 - Old Testament sacrifices – corporate, not individual*

"The value of the sacrificial rite lay wholly in the fact of its being God's will, God's appointment, what God ordained as the machinery of His grace for national purposes. Let it not be forgotten that in the Old Testament what confronts God is the people much more than the soul. It is of grace that He consents to receive the proffered life and reckons the gift for public righteousness." Forsyth [1909] COC p.179

### *39 - Jesus' life laid down*

"...it would have mattered a whole world if Jesus had met his death naturally, by accident or disease. Everything turns, not on His life having been taken from Him, but on its having been laid down. Everything, for His purpose, turns on the will to die. But, nonetheless, for that purpose, it had to be a death of moral violence [inflicted, that is, by human wickedness and the wresting of the law], to give its full force to both man's sin and Christ's blood. "Men of blood", in the Old Testament, were not mere killers, but murderers. So that we say it would have mattered a whole world if the death had not been violent and wicked, if Jesus had died of disease in His bed, or by accidental poison." Forsyth [1909] COC p.180-1

### *40 - Conquest of death – pleasurable to God*

"...the acceptable and valuable thing to God was not mere demise, in whatever form. The Lord and Giver of life can have no pleasure in life's extinction...His [Christ's] death was precious in God's sight as the conquest of death, as the negation of death, as the ironic antith-

esis of death, the surmounting of its accepted arrest, the capture of its captivity". Forsyth [1909] COC p.180

#### *41 - Christ's death a transition, not an extinction*

*See Hebrews 12.4*

"It is death as transition, not extinction; yet it is transition not as mere metamorphosis, that is, not as a mere step in a large *process*, not as a new stage of even moral growth, not as a fresh stadium in the normal evolution of a personality. There is involved in it a *crisis*. Take the case of the resurrection. ...It crowns a real moral crisis and achievement. It seals a decisive moral act. His death and resurrection really form two sides of the one act. Christ's resurrection is but the obverse of the real personal crisis in His death. And His death is redemptive only as a personal moral deed. It is a moral conquest only as it is a crucial moral achievement, in which His personality was not only unscathed but consummated; and not only consummated but effectual, victorious, and decisive. The shedding of blood means this finality. It means something which touches the seat of life...

The essential thing was not self sacrifice [which might be wilful, and often is wilful, as well as futile, or even mischievous], but the sacrifice of the central self - not sacrifice *by* self but *of* self, and of the whole self, sacrifice not merely voluntary but personal, loving, and entire. Not till then is it striving unto blood." Forsyth [1909] COC p.181-2

#### *42 – Sacrifices: Leviticus 17.11*

"[1] The positive truth is that the sacrifice is the result of God's grace and not its cause. It is given by God before it is given to Him. The real ground of any atonement is not in God's wrath but God's grace. There can be no talk of propitiation in the sense of mollification, or of purchasing God's grace, in any religion founded on the Bible.

[2] The speculative and explanatory truth is that the pleasing thing to God, and the effective element in the matter, is not death but life. The blood was shed with the direct object, not of killing the animal, but of detaching and releasing the life, isolating it, as it were, from the material base of body and flesh, and presenting it in this refined state to God... The flesh was eaten when drained of the blood; the blood could never be thus consumed. It was too sacred." Forsyth [1909] COC p.186-7.

#### *43 – Sacrifices: outward symbols for a real inner self-offering*

"..the material sacrifice was, and was meant to be, but an outward symbol of the real inner sacrifice, which was the offerer's self-oblation. The victim, or the gift, signified the inward and

hearty submission of the donor to God's prior gift and provision. It was the living symbol of a life, i.e. of an obedient will....The sacrifice as a mere tribute was worthless, a mere tax paid by unwilling fear. It must come freely. It must be the symbol and sacrament of the worshipper's self-surrender to God's positive will in the sacrificial act. Indeed, even when freely given, it was but a response, it was not absolutely spontaneous. It was not the worshipper's invention; it was God's prescription, the initiative was His. It was not a gift to God, but an appropriation of God's gift in the institution itself...the Levitical system ...was part of an elect *nation*, whose inspiration took form in institutions as well as prophets. And the prophets who denounced sacrifice did so only when it was made an opus operatum\* and the ritual became a religion in itself.

...Thus we have two things. The worship was ethical in nature. And it was responsive and obedient in its form. The ritual act was valuable only as the organ of the ethical obedience. The sacrifices were consecrated by self-sacrifice. It was the offerer's will that lay on the altar. What was precious was not the thing, not the elements, but the act....The widow's mite could be more sacramental than the nation's mint. The act was the precious thing...It is God that makes religion and not man. Faith itself is the gift of God, being the echo of the Christ that He gave to our race, and to each man only as a member of that race so redeemed. We are saved only on God's terms of a social redemption. Everyman is saved only by the act which saved man." Forsyth [1909] COC p.187-191.

\* a mechanical work

#### *44 - Sacrifice of Christ: He offered Himself*

"What is offered up, therefore, is life in its most intimate, spiritual, and moral form. This does away with several unhappy notions...that the pleasing, satisfying, atoning thing to God is the suffering. It destroys the idea of Atonement as consisting in equivalent pain...suffering becomes a mere condition, and not a *factor*, in the sacrificial act...we get rid of the idea that the essence of sacrifice...was any *thing*, any piece of property. It must be the life. Blood means essential, central, personal moral life...sacrifice by blood meant sacrifice of precious life.

But our will is our dearest life, the thing we cling to most and give up last. Our will alone is our ownest own, the only dear thing we can and ought really to sacrifice. The blood as life means the central will, the self-will, the whole will, in loving oblation. This is the sacrifice even in God. The cross does not in the New Testament exhibit God as accepting sacrifice so much as making it. And it is never in the New Testament represented as the extremity of suffering, but as the superlative of death; it is not the depth of agony but the height of surrender; and that again is represented as the triumph of eternal life. It is the absolute active death of self-will *into* the holy will of God; but also *by* that will; the complete, central, vital obedience of the holy to the holy in a necessary act on the Eternal scale.



It was an act, and not a mere mood of resignation...an act made necessary by the organic pragmatism and moral unity of Christ's whole life; which was a whole life rooted in the organic context and moral necessity of a national history; which history again was integrated into the spiritual necessity of God's holy purpose for the whole race and its redemption... The holy God alone could answer Himself and meet the demand of His own holiness. So Paul felt in his own relation to Christ's holiness. "Not I, but Christ living in me."

We make sacrifices, and costly ones, which yet do not draw blood from us. They do not come home. They do not go to the very centre of our life. They do not touch the nerve or strain the heart....But when we speak of the blood of Christ we mean that what He did drew upon the very citadel of His personality and involved His total self. The foundations of His great deep were broken up. His whole personality was put into His work and identified with it; not merely His whole interest or ambition. The saving work of God drew blood from Christ as it drew Christ from God – and not from God's side only but from His heart....He poured out His soul unto death...Man's sin drew upon all God's Son, and taxed the Holiest to the height. It made call upon what is most deep in Christ and dear to God – Himself, His person, His vital soul, His blood. The love of God is only shed into our hearts in the shedding of that most precious blood." Forsyth [1909] COC p.191-196

#### *45 - Sacrifice of Christ: meeting place of Prophet and Priest*

"The language of sacrifice, therefore, has no meaning for us, except as it covers acts or requirements which are at heart ethical. But in passing to this stage we are not simply repudiating Hebraism. We are interpreting it...God made the first sacrifice, to which all man's sacrifices are but a response. Our best is but a faint echo of His. And we can never come to the depth of sacrifice where God has not been before us and outdone us. If we make our bed in hell He is there. This is the meeting-point of the priestly and prophetic streams in the Old Testament. To obey everywhere is better than sacrifice. The good priest would have said that as honestly as the good prophet. For the ritual was but an act of obedience. That was its real worth...It was the surrender of the will. Only that in one case it took the form of worship and in the other of conduct. And for life the one is quite as needful as the other...Thus Christ consummated the priest no less than the prophet of the sacred community. It is one-sided to see in Him only the victory of the prophetic line. His offering of Himself was the Eternal Spirit of His people's past returning, in complete satisfaction, to God who gave it." Forsyth [1909] COC p.197-199.

#### *46 - Sacrifice moves to judgment*

"When we speak of the blood of Christ, then, we mean that what He did involved not simply

the *effort* of His whole self [as it might be with any hero taxed to his uttermost], but the *exhaustive obedience and surrender* of His total self...it obeyed the necessity of an actual historic and spiritual situation...there is a divine must which Israel's history itself was set to serve and failed. It was complete obedience on a universal scale to the moral requirements of grace, ie to a holy grace, to what the holiness of grace required in a situation of racial sin. The sacrifice of Christ was inevitable by His holiness in such a world. Holiness must suffer in the midst of sin. And it was a sacrifice made to the Holy. It was not offered to man but *for* man, even when we magnify to the utmost its immense effect *on* man. It was first offered to a holy God to hallow His name and make it honourable.

But in saying this what do we say? We have passed upward from the idea of *sacrifice* to the graver and more ethical idea of *judgment*. We recall the fact that the effusion of blood was a mark not merely of temple ritual but of criminal execution...And full sacrifice to a holy God involves by analogy the submission of self to the moral order and judgment of God. Holiness and judgment are for ever inseparable...The note of judgment runs through the whole genius of Israel's history as surely do sanctity, submission, salvation and the Kingdom – and especially on its prophetic side. Forsyth [1909] COC p.203-205

#### *47 - God chooses not to punish sin but expiate it: so confessing [- making public -] His holiness*

God must either punish sin or expiate it, for the sake of His infrangibly\* holy nature. Do let us take the holiness of God centrally and seriously, not as an attribute isolated and magnified, but as God's very essence and nature, changeless and inexorable. The holiness of God is a deeper revelation in the cross than His love; for it is what gives His love divine value. And it is meaningless without judgment. The one thing He could not do was simply wipe the slate and write off the loss. He must either inflict punishment or assume it. And He chose the latter course, as honouring the laws while saving the guilty.

He took His own judgment....The holy law is satisfied by an adequacy short of equivalency, by due confession of it and not by exaction; by due confession which fully gauges the whole moral situation, as neither sin nor love can do; by practical confession in an experience's holy to God as it was sympathetic to man; and by practical confession of God's holiness far more than man's guilt. What a holy God requires is the due confession of His holiness before even the confession of sin. Forsyth [1909] COC p.205-6

\* {infrangible - unable to be broken in pieces, unable to be violated or destroyed}

#### *48 - Christ's death confesses the holiness of God*

"And this is the sense in which Christ could confess from His inmost experience, could confess with His blood. His practical and entire confession of holiness from the midst of sinners He loved is the divine significance of His blood. No obedience to a holy God is complete which does not recognise His judgment, and recognise it in a practical way of action, by accepting it – not necessarily in amount but in principle; not equivalently, as to the amount of suffering, but adequately, as to confession of sanctity; and confesses it practically, silently, in act and suffering. And who but God could adequately confess in action the holiness of God? And who but the sinless could confess the sin of man? Who else but the holy could realise what it meant as sin? Forsyth [1909] COC p.207

#### *49 - Pain of God in dealing with sin*

"Love in sacrifice means pain. But for holy love it means moral pain. And moral pain is something more than passive; it is active. It is not the pain of a sting merely, but of wrath; the pain not of a wrong but of rectifying it; not of grief but of judgment. Holiness in very love must set judgment in the earth. We have here to do, then, especially with the order of pain that sin gives to God, in reacting against it, in judging and destroying it. The blood of Christ stands not simply for the sting of sin on God but the scourge of God on sin, not simply for God's sorrow over sin but for God's wrath on sin. It expresses not simply the bleeding of the feet that seek the sinner but the bloodshed of the battle that destroys the prince of this world, that breaks in us the guilty entail \*, and establishes the holy kingdom. Forsyth [1909] COC p.207-8. \* {entail – inevitable involvement or result}

#### *50 - Christ's submission a confession of the holiness of God*

The total self-oblation\* of man to God means before all else that dread recognition of holiness which from sin's side must be felt as God's wrath and curse; its recognition in experience as judgment; and in recognition on a scale adequate to both God and man in their greatness. The prime question of religion is not how shall I feel a child of the Father, but how shall I stand before my judge, how shall man be just with God? What must I do to be saved? Christ's first business in saving was to honour the Father's holy love. He saved man because He first saved God from being mocked by man. His submission to judgment was not simply His experience of doom and suffering as incidents of life, but His submission to them as God's purpose for Him, and His confession of them as expressions of the holiness of God and of His power to make man's wrath praise Him...No real revelation is possible except as Atonement and redemption. I do not mean that Atonement came as a preliminary to clear the ground for revelation, but that revelation came and could come only in the form of Atonement.

Forsyth [1909] COC p.209-210

\* self offering

### *51 - The obedience of Christ's total life crowned in his death*

"It is not death that atones, but that supreme act and expression of the holy, obedient life which does such justice to God's holiness as the Son alone could do: and which is possible only under the conditions of death, and of such death as Christ died. The death of Christ was an experience in His life, yet it was always the dominant, and at last the crowning one, which gave meaning to all the rest even for Himself - as He came to learn. It was a function of His total life, that function of it which at once faced and effected the saving, the last, judgment of God. His blood was shed in Gethsemane as truly as on Calvary; but it was on Calvary that it rose to seal all and to found forever our peace with God.

It was there that it rose to establish our evangelical faith in us, to establish it not as an affection simply but as a life-confidence and self disposal, as a faith that turns not upon the filling of the hungry heart but upon the stilling of the roused conscience both in God and man by the complete satisfaction and forgiveness once for all. Forsyth [1909] COC p.210-211

### *52 - Christ "made sin"*

*See 2 Corinthians 5.21*

In being "made sin", treated as sin [though not as a sinner], Christ experienced sin as God does. He felt sin with God, and sin's judgment with men. He realised, as God, how real sin was, how radical, how malignant, how deadly to the Holy One's very being. When Christ died at sin's hands it meant that sin was death to the holiness of God and both could not live in the same world. When He rose it meant that what was to live and rule in the world was the holy God. Dying as man, Christ placed His whole self beside man under the judgment of God. He was beside man in court but on God's side in the issue, confessing God's holiness in the judgment, and justifying His treatment of sin.

...And there is no justification of men except by this justification, this self-justification, of God. Never is man so just with God as when his broken, holy heart calls just the judgment of God which he feels but has not himself earned; and never could man be just with God but through God's justification of Himself in the blood of Christ. Forsyth [1909] COC p.21-214

### *53 - Christ's confession and ours*

"God made Him sin, treated Him as if He were sin; He did not view Him as sinful. That is quite another matter. God made Him to be sin - it does not say He made Him sinful. God lovingly treated Him as human sin, and with His consent judged human sin in Him and on him. Personal guilt Christ could never confess. There is that guilt which can only be con-

fessed by the guilty. "I did it." That kind of confession Christ could never make. That is the part of the confession that we make, and we cannot make it effectually until we are in union with Christ and His great lone work of perfectly and practically confessing the holiness of God. There is a racial confession that can only be made by the holy; and there is a personal confession that can only be made by the guilty. That latter, I say, is a confession that Christ could never make. In that respect, Christ did not die, and did not suffer, did not confess, in our stead. We alone, the guilty, can make that confession; but we cannot make it with Christian effect without the Cross and the confession there. We say then not only "I did this," but "I am guilty before the holiness confessed in the Cross." The grand sin is not to sin against the law but against the Cross. The sin of sins is not transgression, but unfaith." Forsyth [1910] WOC p.150-151

### *54 - Saved by the establishment of holiness and damning of sin*

"it was the adequate confession, in act and suffering, "Thou art holy as Thou judgest". That man should confess this vicariously and victoriously in Christ crucified and risen is the re-establishment of God's holiness in the world. We can only understand any justification of man as it is grounded in this justification – this self-justification – of God. The sinner could only be saved by something that thus damned the sin. The Saviour was not punished, but He took the penalty of sin, the chastisement of our peace. It was in no sense as if He felt chastised or condemned [as even Calvin said], but because He willingly bowed, with a moral understanding possible only to the sinless, under the divine ordinance of a suffering death and judgment which was holily ordained to wait on the sin in His kin. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The metaphor denotes the radicality, totality, and finality of the whole action in the realism of the moral world – which even high sacrifice, not resisting unto blood, only slurs or shelves – when it does not toy with it." Forsyth [1909] COC p.214-215

### *55 - The words of Christ made effective by His death*

"It is notable that Christ speaks of his blood only at His life's end, while during life He spoke only of forgiving grace without any such expiation [except in the ransom passage]. Why was this so?

Was it not, first, because His grand total witness, which death but pointed, was the grace of God's holy love; and the exposure of sin could only come by the light of that revelation?

And was it not, second, because His revelation and offer of holy grace without sacrifice and judgment failed of its effect; because even the great, uplifted, and joyful *invitation*, "Come unto Me," failed until it was enacted from the mighty gloom of the cross: because only the uplifting of the cross and not the uplifting of His voice, draws all men unto Him; because in

Christ mere prophetism, stern or tender, found its greatest failure; because, as prophet, He could neither make His own cleave to Him, nor make the people see how much more than a prophet He was; He could not keep them from murdering their Messiah?

But according to Old Testament ideas, this murder was the consummation of high-handed sin, of the kind of sin that had no expiation, that was unprovided for in the Hebrew economy of grace. There was no grace for the deliberate rejection of grace. There a new expiation must come in, that would cover even this. The death of Christ expiated even the inexplicable sin that slew Him, and the sin of a whole Humanity whose religious antagonist Israel was.”  
Forsyth [1909] COC p.215-217

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Janice and David Boan, an Australian couple, live in Perth, the capital city of the state of Western Australia.

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At the beginning of 2012, in concert with others, their work became more accessible at the York St Silo, at 4 York Street in North Perth. It is here that David and Jan share the work of the putting forth of God's Word.

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