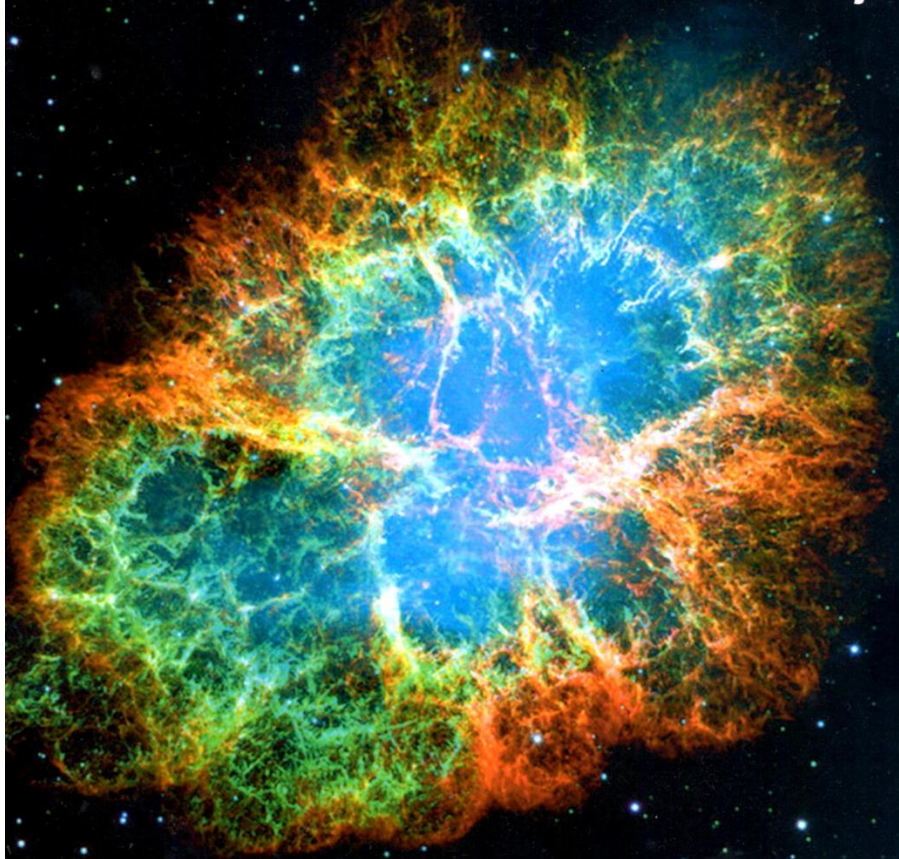


The Way Things Are

The Common Man's Search for Reality



John Potter D. Litt.



John Potter was born on the 10th of April 1934 in Adelaide, South Australia. His first degree was in Agricultural Science and he was employed by the South Australian Department of Agriculture for twenty years (1957-76). As Principal Soils Officer (1966-76) he was in charge of Soil Conservation Research & Extension, Land Mapping and Arid Zone Ecology in South Australia. His involvements with farming communities led him to an interest in Rural Sociology; in the 1960s he pioneered a client-centred methodology for Agricultural Extension that had far reaching outcomes for farmers across Australia.

In 1976 John felt a sense of calling to Africa. His work there required that he develop skills in education and he returned to university life for a time, first as a student and later as a lecturer. He holds a Post-Graduate Teaching Diploma, a Bachelor's Degree in Education Management, a Master's Degree in Educational Philosophy and a Doctor of Letters for his collected published papers in Theological Education.

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In the midst of all of the above activities, John has maintained a strong Christian world view. He has led Christian Fellowships in Malawi and South Australia and taught at a School of Missions in South Africa. During all of this he has conducted a persistent search for reality. "The Way Things Are" represents his walk to freedom from the mire of religiosity, distractions and distortions that so profoundly impact the post-modernist world.

THE WAY THINGS ARE

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
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PART I: THE GOD FACTOR AND HUMAN AGENCY

CHAPTER 1: Beginnings	2
CHAPTER 2: Our Humanity – Ontological Considerations	17
CHAPTER 3: Our Humanity – Psychological Considerations	33
CHAPTER 4: Knowledge & Learning	47
CHAPTER 5: Human Agency	67
CHAPTER 6: Kingdom Agency	87

PART II: LIVING TOGETHER IN HOUSEHOLDS AND ECCLESIAS

CHAPTER 7: The Household	107
CHAPTER 8: The Ecclesia	120
CHAPTER 9: The Christian Ecclesia	131
CHAPTER 10: Obstructions to Tabernacle Worship	147

PART III: LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER 11: The Kingdom of God	161
CHAPTER 12: Beyond the Ecclesia	169
CHAPTER 13: Taking the Land	182
CHAPTER 14: Ordering the Land	195
CHAPTER 15: Dealing with Syncretism	206
A FINAL NOTE	225

REFERENCES	227
------------	-----

INDEX	236
-------	-----

PREFACE

Why has the Christian Church in the West declined in membership and influence over the past fifty years? Some denominations show miniscule growth but overall the church has massively lost ground numerically. In the 1930's about 85% of Australians were in church on Sunday; these days it is a good week when church attendance is 5%. For those of us who value Judaeo-Christian principles this is challenging; post-modernist forces have over-ridden the established order and Christians have been silent against the onslaught. Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against his *ecclesia*. How is it then that the church has become low in numbers and lost influence?

I have a second question. Over the past one hundred and fifty years or so there has been considerable effort in mission and aid into the developing world, and there has been extra-ordinary church growth in some areas. But those of us who have worked in mission know that 'Christians' in the developing world are most often animists wearing 'Christian coats'. Further, the gospel has not brought the abundant life promised by Jesus if we measure it in terms of reasonable economic prosperity. Why is it that most Christians in the developing world remain desperately poor?

I have traced both problems to *misconceptions* with regard to: (1) our human nature - how God has created us and planned for us to have an intimate relationship with Himself; (2) the basic social structures that the Lord has prescribed for us to live in; and (3) the Gospel we preach. So, my first objective in writing this book has been to deal with some foundational thoughts as to origins, human ontology and human agency. My second objective has been to distinguish between the household and the *ecclesia*, for I find these to be often confused. And my third objective has been to outline the Gospel from a God centred view, rather than a human view. My optimistic hope is that if we better understand ourselves, get the community structures right and put the Lord's agenda at the centre

there will be less trouble in developing the process - the Body of Christ moving forward in unity with a clear understanding of God's purposes and strategies in our time.

Another question arises: Why do I need to write about these things when they are plainly revealed in scripture; how come they are not common knowledge, at least in the church? One reason I think is that many people do not bother to ask the questions; they take life as it comes, concentrating on surviving and enjoying life if and when they can. A second reason is that there is a tendency for people to operate in 'common sense' notions. If anything is over-rated it is human common sense. Aristotle used it to define the forces that bring about motion. 'When an arrow is moving through the air', he said, 'it displaces air which moves around to the back of the arrow and propels it forward'. He also said that when a light object and a heavy object are dropped from a height, the heavy object will reach the ground first! Well, Newton showed the first hypothesis to be wrong and Galileo discounted the second. Aristotle's notions would not have been so bad if he had kept them to himself but his peers and, much later Thomas Aquinas, declared them to be the 'real stuff'. As a result, the world was kept in bondage for some sixteen hundred years until Galileo went close to being burnt at the stake for daring to question Aristotle's opinions. A third reason is that there has been a deliberate plan to mask out the reality that God loves the *cosmos* and has a purpose for humans in it. We call this deception 'the Great Apostasy' or the 'Great Harlot' (Rev.17:5). It began at Babel (c. 2200 BC) and was carried by its agents to every nation on the earth (Rev.18:1-3). Its principles build a fog around our minds and lead us into deception.

It is my hope that this booklet will motivate people to think a bit more and by so doing discover more completely what God's purpose is for their lives and, thereby, be better equipped to live out to the fullest what it means to be God's sons. Mind you, I am aware that reality cannot be found by reading books or listening to sermons, so I have not attempted to provide all the answers – just

provide some starting points that I trust will prove motivational.

Some of the language I have used will be strange to some readers. There is not much that I can do about that; each discipline has its own language which must be learned if you are going to engage with it constructively. I encourage the reader to use a dictionary and enter 'pastures not previously grazed', something I have been challenged to do many times over the past eighty years.

John Potter

Adelaide, South Australia, 2015

PART I

**THE GOD FACTOR
AND
HUMAN AGENCY**

CHAPTER 1

BEGINNINGS

“In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1)

I want to start where the Bible starts: ‘In the beginning, God... (Genesis 1:1). Is there a super-being that created the universe? Most people believe so, although their understanding of His nature and character varies considerably. On the other hand, some people have gone to extra-ordinary lengths to deny His existence. Why is that? All of us hold fast to pre-suppositions, fundamental beliefs that guide our thinking and actions. The deep things of life are laid in us at our mother’s knee; we hold fast to them despite the noise around us. Why do I believe in God? I can give you some rational arguments but I have found that they will not convince an atheist, no matter how compelling they are!

A DOCTRINE OF GOD

The Judeo-Christian position is that God is a spiritual being (John 4:24). According to Jesus, nobody has ever seen God, which is not surprising if He is non-corporeal. We do, of course, know a great deal about God’s nature and capacity from the complexity and majesty of the creation (Romans 1:20). And, over time, God has revealed Himself, to the Jews first and then to the church, as ‘father’ (the benevolent One who gives life), ‘Son’ (the one who demonstrates how we should live) and the ‘Holy Spirit’ (the one who empowers us and provides us with constant encouragement). These revelations led the church fathers to develop a Trinitarian account of the ‘godhead’ – God as three persons. My own view is that God is ONE but has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit to help us understand His attributes; and the necessary arrangements by which He may relate to us, His co-workers, and us to Him, on an ongoing basis.

THE CREATION

I believe that the universe was created by a supreme being (Gen.1:1, John 1:3, Rev.4:11). Further, I have discovered that the universe is an open system and that the Creator is active in it, ‘upholding all things by the word of His power’ (Heb.1:3). What is the evidence for such a position?

Somatic Considerations

Over time I have discovered that there is nothing in nature whereby order arises out of disorder spontaneously. If we wish to create something we must supply three ingredients: know-how (*intelligence*), raw materials (*pre-existent matter*) and work (*energy*), and it could not have been any different during the synthesis of life at the beginning (see Williams, 1980). Energy must have been supplied by an intelligent being to create the *cosmos* and this energy must have been obtained from outside the *cosmos* - not within it. (I am using the Greek word *cosmos* because this speaks of both structure *and* process). Regardless of whether it is in the laboratory or in eternity, ‘if a *Logos* envisages a creative activity then the *Logos* must supply the energy and intelligence required to make it happen’ (Wilder-Smith 1976). I have introduced the Greek word *logos* here because the English translation ‘word’ (John 1:1) is a very weak representation of the concept. The root of *logos* is *lego* (yes – the children’s game) which means ‘to select and place’. The assumption is that there is something to select and that the agent has both the intelligence and ability (energy/power) to place the object. Such an agent is called a *logos*.

With regard to raw materials, St Augustine was insistent that God created the world *ex nihilo*, i.e. ‘out of nothing’. It was unacceptable to him that the universe was made from God’s own substance because this would have made it ontologically equal with God.

The immensity of the universe and the advanced principles of design

evident in the morphology and physiology of plants and animals provide clear evidence of a *Logos* of extraordinary power and intelligence. The chance that living things exhibiting extremely complex substances synthesized in highly specialised glands and organs, inter-related in ways so ingenious that many of them remain unknown to medical science to this day, could have arisen spontaneously is so low that in any other field of scientific endeavour the proposal would have been long discarded as fantasy (Lammerts, 1976).

The notion that similarities shown by different plant and animal species are evidence of an evolutionary process is denied; *there are no intermediate forms either in the fossils or currently existing*. As a creationist I understand similarities between species to be evidence of ‘streams of creative thought’ developed by ‘a *Logos* of sufficient intelligence to utilize short-cuts in His biological synthesis’ (Wilder-Smith, 1976).

The Arctic Tern nests in the Arctic. Before their young can fly, the adults take-off for South America, leaving their progeny behind. Two weeks later the young birds take-off *en masse* and fly ten thousand kilometers to land in the same field that their parents landed. There must be some ‘guiding hand’ involved in this and similar processes. When atomic physicist Professor Marcus Oliphant saw the planets revolving in the heavens, silently and in perfect order, the only word he could think of to describe what he saw was ‘love’. We agree – God IS love!

Psychological Considerations

Rationality is so much with us that it requires no hypothesis. The creationist position is that a human is a fusion of a somatic and a rational being (Augustine, 1961; Pittman, 1989). This is in contrast to the reductive positivist scientific view that the mind is a component of the *soma*, although there is no agreement amongst positivists as to where the mind is located (see Chapter 2).

One view of human agency is that it is *rational purposive action* (see below). But humans often act irrationally. A system of choice is operating. This system is regarded as ‘free’, but whether choice is free is a moot point. The revelatory and innovative thoughts that humans experience from time to time require a rational source of information from *outside* of the closed human system, presumably from another rational being.

Supernatural Considerations

Occult practices exhibiting supernatural manifestations are commonly found in human society. They support the view that there are spiritual forces operating in an unseen world beyond the corporeal.

Some people claim to have an intimate relationship with the Creator. They say that they receive information via *pneumatikon* (‘things’ of the spirit’ – Chapter 6). Such *logi* are said to be prophetic, creative and informative (I Cor.12: 1-11). Are such people deluded? ‘By their fruits you shall know them’ (Matt.7:20)!

WHAT I DO NOT BELIEVE

I do not believe that the universe is a closed system or that it is perfecting itself through natural processes, i.e. I do not hold to the evolutionary hypothesis. Let’s look at the evidence.

Physical Laws

Evolution is diametrically opposed to a universal trend in nature expressed as the Second Law of Thermodynamics. There are different ways of stating this law. Miller (1972) suggests the following: *The entropy of the universe never decreases; during any process, the entropy either remains constant or increases.* Entropy refers to the unavailability of energy, so the Law is saying that in nature, while the total amount of energy in a closed system remains the same (the First Law of Thermodynamics) all

processes tend to result in some energy being converted to a form which is un-usable. To put it simply, if I leave my car under a tree for twenty years it does not improve. The proposition that the world is perfecting itself is in direct opposition to reality.

Compatibility

In the late 19th Century, the assault on the church from Darwinists was so powerful that some churchmen felt the need to develop a theistic account of evolution. They did this by arguing that a day in the Genesis 1 account could be taken to be a long time; and their scriptural backing for this proposition was II Peter 3:8: ‘...a day unto the Lord is but a thousand years, and a thousand years is but a day’. But this argument deliberately ignores Exodus 20:8-11: ‘Remember the Sabbath day... for in six days the Lord made the heaven, the earth, the sea and all that is in them’. (Did God require us to remember the Sabbath only once in a thousand years?) It also ignored the balance of II Peter 3 in which Peter says that in the last days there would be scoffers who would deliberately ignore the known facts, i.e. that ‘the world was formed by the word of God, the earth standing out of the water and in the water... and being overflowed by water (the Flood), perished’. Evolutionists are quick to discount the Flood for to accept the Flood is to take away any possibility of the long time scale necessary for evolutionary development. The two belief systems, creation and evolution, are not only incompatible but diametrically opposed. They cannot be combined in the way that theistic evolutionists have suggested.

- With regards to origins: Evolution gives no account of origins. The Creation account hypothesizes a Creator.
- With regards to the system: Evolution prescribes a closed isolated system (isolated from what?). Creation argues for an open system and an active Creator.
- With regards to process: Evolution proposes a universe that is

perfecting itself through natural processes within itself. The Creationist position is that the world as we know it was created ‘very good’ but is now deteriorating due to irreversible tendencies within itself, all natural processes leading to disorder and a loss of energy in a usable form.

- With regards to age: Evolutionists assume an immensely old universe, around 4.5+ billion years old according to ^{40}K dating. The Biblical record suggests an age of 6100-6500 years.
- With regards to the evidence: Evolutionary theory claims that the fossil bearing rocks are evidence for evolution. Creationists argue that the fossil bearing rocks are evidence of the deluge, a violent hydrological event clearly evident in the modern landscape.

The two accounts being incompatible, it follows that if one position is disproved at any point, the other is established. Let’s look again at the age of the Earth.

Dating the Earth

Prior to radio-active dating, geologists were supreme in the business of dating the world. They prescribed nineteen major geological strata all nicely dated by circular argument – the sediments were dated by the fossils and the fossils were dated by the sediments. In fact, there is no place on earth where all the sediments occur in one locality; at most there are two or three strata at any one site. There are also numerous occurrences where the sediments are inverted, ‘young’ strata lying under ‘old’ strata. Geologists were ‘skating on thin ice’ when this was all they had to convince us that they could date the universe. It must have been a relief to them when Willard Libby introduced the notion of radioactive dating, for this seemed to replace what was essentially guess work with genuine science.

Radio-active dating is a big field so I will confine myself to saying something about the dating of organic debris using the carbon isotope ^{14}C . But first a little physics. According to our present understanding, the nuclei of chemical elements contain ‘heavy’ particles: protons and neutrons. The number of protons present in a particular nucleus is called the atomic number and the combined number of protons and neutrons is called the mass number. Each element has a prescribed number of protons, e.g. oxygen has 8 protons. But many elements have *isotopes*, forms in which the number of neutrons varies. For example, there are eleven known isotopes of the element chromium (24 protons). The most common form of naturally occurring chromium has a mass number of 52, expressed as the symbol ^{52}Cr , i.e. it has 24 protons and 28 neutrons. But in nature this form of chromium is usually found in association with smaller amounts of isotopes with mass numbers 50, 53 and 54, i.e. 26, 29 and 30 neutrons respectively. Isotopes are generally ‘unstable’, so over time they revert to the stable form. This is called radio-active decay. The time it takes for *half of the mass* of an isotope to revert is fixed and is referred to as the *half-life*. The half-life is a fixed time but, interestingly enough, it is impossible to predict which atom will be the next to decay – this fact, along with Quantum theory, introduced an Uncertainty Principle that brought physicists to a more sober reflection in the late 19th Century.

The stable carbon isotope is ^{12}C , but cosmic rays in the outer atmosphere are constantly converting nitrogen to the carbon isotope ^{14}C . At any one time there is always a small amount of ^{14}C in the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide (CO_2). Plants take up CO_2 to synthesize glucose, and animals eat plants, so all living organisms contain some ^{14}C . When an organism dies the ^{14}C decays to ^{14}N (nitrogen) so, by measuring the ratio of ^{14}C to ^{14}N in plant or animal remains and knowing the half-life of ^{14}C (5730 years) we can calculate of age of death of the organism. But there is an important assumption here, the assumption that the ratio of ^{14}C and ^{14}N in the atmosphere is *in equilibrium*, a process calculated to take about 30 thousand years. When Professor Libby received his Nobel Prize for developing the carbon dating method he was asked about this. He said: ‘I

was aware of the problem but the geologists tell us that the world is millions of years old so the atmosphere must be in equilibrium'. In fact, current estimates suggest a disparity of 30-32% from equilibrium conditions, i.e. the amount of ^{14}C is still building. No wonder there are a few disparities in carbon dating! In 1997, a South African newspaper printed an article showing two dinner plates with flowers painted on them that had recently been 'discovered'. Believing that the plates must be very old, the finder sent them to the UK for carbon dating. The results came back declaring them to be 33 000 years old. A lady in Pretoria saw the picture of the plates and said to her husband: 'Good heavens! There are the plates that I painted in 1947'. She wrote to the paper but neither her letter nor a retraction was printed. There are severe problems with ^{14}C dating and the same issues are relevant to ^{40}K (potassium nuclide) dating. If the lack of equilibrium is taken into account, ages calculated by isotope methods must be drastically reduced.

There are other ways of estimating the age of the Earth. Professor Tom Barnes, at the University of El Paso, Texas, has graphed measurements of the Earth's magnetic field over time, starting with the measurements of Horace Lamb. The graph shows that the magnetic field has decreased with time exponentially. The field is presumed to be due to electrical currents running through the earth, so, if the field has decreased, there must have been a corresponding release of heat. Extrapolating backwards, Barnes's graph suggests that beyond eight to ten thousand years the amount of heat liberated would be sufficient to vaporize the Earth. Thus, by this evidence, the earth must be young and evolution cannot be the mechanism by which the things around us have developed.

Another investigation supporting a young Earth is that concerning the amount of cosmic dust that has accumulated on the planet. Many people have measured the rate at which dust is reaching the Earth's surface. We also know about the Poynton Robinson effect, a process causing cosmic dust to be swept into the Sun that makes it certain that the amount of dust reaching us today is less than that in former times. However, assuming the

rate to have been constant and taking the age of the Earth to be 4.5+ billion years we can calculate the amount of cosmic dust that must have arrived on the Earth. It would be sufficient to cover the whole Earth to a depth somewhere between 16m and 33m! In the late 1960s, billions of dollars were spent getting a man on the Moon. One of the problems NASA faced was how to deal with the dust presumed to be present on the Moon surface, seeing that there was no wind or water to remove it. Apollo 10, the last before the historic Apollo 11 landing, was specifically sent up to test the depth of the dust. Those of you who saw it will remember that the landing module had long legs, long enough to cater for the expected depth of dust. When Neil Armstrong stepped out of the Apollo 11 capsule, the first words that he spoke after his 'one giant step for mankind' comment was: 'I can scratch through the dust to the rock beneath'! The dust was 3mm deep. Unless we can devise a method for dust to be removed from the Moon's surface, we must accept that the Moon is young.

Coming to our planet – where is the cosmic dust? Generally speaking, there is no mantle of dust evident on the Earth's surface so we must presume that it has been swept away by wind and water into streams and carried to the oceans. (The almost rainless and windless Atacama Desert in Northern Chile is the exception. There is a 2-3mm mantle of dust on the land there). But how can we measure the quantity of dust in the oceans? As it happens, cosmic dust contains a constant proportion of nickel, an element relatively rare on the planet. Thus, an estimate of the amount of nickel in streams and ocean sediments provides an estimate of the amount of cosmic dust present. Numerous measurements show that the amount of nickel is low, sufficient only to account for an amount of dust arriving at today's rates over a period of eight to ten thousand years.

But what about light travel: how can a young Earth theory stand up in consideration of the huge distances between objects in the universe and the time taken for reflected light to reach us? Creationists like Dr Henry Morris have claimed that, in the absence of any data to the contrary, if the

concept of creation means anything at all the universe would have been created ‘in working condition’, i.e. the universe would have manifested with light already traveling between the planetary bodies. But there are other possible explanations. In the late 1960s, Professor Herbert Dingle of the University of London revisited Faraday’s idea that light does not travel in straight lines but along surfaces that have an arc-tan relation with Euclidian distances. If this is so, then light originating at the extremity of the universe could reach us in sixteen light years!

Alternatively, Setterfield and Norman (1987) have published results showing that the speed of light is diminishing. If the decay was exponential like the magnetic field, this might explain the apparent disparity. All of these arguments have been honest attempts to explain the unexplainable from a creationist position. Not surprisingly they have been hotly contested by the secular humanist scientific community.

Not so easily refuted are the conclusions of a Creationist Physics Professor at the Adelaide University, Dr John Hartnett. Building on the propositions of Humphrey (1994) and physicist/cosmologist Moshe Carmelli (1990, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2006), Hartnett makes the case for a ‘stretched out universe’ in which earth time is around 6000 years (Hartnett, 2010). Of particular interest is Carmelli’s questioning (using Einstein’s Theories of General and Special Relativity) the need of dark (undetectable) matter and energy as required by the Tully-Fisher Law of conventional cosmology. Continuing this line of thought, Hartnett has been successful in developing post-Newtonian equations that account for the missing mass without the need for dark matter (Hartnett 2002 and 2005). This work undoubtedly lifts creationist thought to a new plane of scientific probability; at least to ‘a level playing field’ with the opposition!

These are just a few ideas that come to us from the world of science. Taking the evidence on its merits, it is hard to understand that anybody would take evolution to be an established fact. At best it is an uncertain hypothesis. At worst it is in opposition to known Laws of Physics. The

creationist view is not disputed by genuine science. Of course, acceptance of a creationist view requires that you believe in God. Perhaps the main reason people prefer to hold to a pseudo-scientific view like evolution is that this allows them to eliminate God from the equation.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF CREATION

Having reviewed the creation/evolution debate we can now get back to Genesis 1:1 and note that in the beginning God ‘...created the heaven and the earth’. By *heaven* we understand that the writer means the universal space. How big is it? Nobody knows, although some cosmologists are bent on finding out! But is this a reasonable occupation? What would the end of space look like? How would we recognize it with our limited sensual apparatus? Not that we wish to discourage this research because, no matter how futile it would appear, it can do nothing but bring greater evidence that God is a being of indescribable power and majesty. And the *earth* - is it real? Augustine thought so because he found that you can travel and reliably return to the place from which you started, and find it substantially as you left it.

The positivists tell us that everything started with a Big Bang, the current universe arising from some primordial substance. This, of course, is not an account of origins for no explanation is given for the origin of the primordial substance. Creationists also believe that things happened quickly but attribute creation to a pre-existent being. Admittedly, the origin of God is a mystery but, if the existence of the universe may be claimed to be evidence of a primordial substance, then it holds for the creationist position that it can also be claimed to be evidence for the existence of God.

The Genesis Account

Of all accounts of creation the Biblical Genesis account is the most instructive. It has fascinated the greatest minds. St Augustine, ‘the great

doctor of the church’ and Isaac Newton, ‘the greatest scientist who ever lived’, were two who found it a source of inspiration. But can we believe that such an account is truly a record of the beginning? There are several reasons I think. Firstly, it is not a fanciful account like one Australian aboriginal view that says that humans came from crocodiles or a Zulu view that says the human soul comes out of the ground. Secondly there is good archeological evidence to support its authenticity; Sewell (1994) is a good place to start. Thirdly, as a long time practicing soil scientist/geomorphologist I find the Genesis account plausible in prescribing that:

- The earth came into being as a smooth ball (without form), with nothing on it (void) except for water (Gen.1:2). Modern geologists have confirmed that the Earth’s crust is made up of a continuous layer of silicon/magnesium rock (SIMA = basalt) some 6-8km thick. (There is a theory going around the churches that there is a time gap between Gen.1:1 and Gen.1:2. This is nothing more than Arabian mythology, complete with fire people, *Jinns*, from which we get Genies. There is no support for such a theory in practice or scripture).
- On the second day, half of the water was lifted to create a canopy to protect the earth from cosmic rays and to create a glass house effect for plant growth (Gen.1:6-8). We note also that a mist was provided to water ‘the whole face’ of the ground (Gen.2:6). All in all a wonderful environment for plant growth. No wonder there were giants in the land in those days (see later).
- On Day 3, land plates composed of silicon/aluminium (SIAL = granite) were *created*, with a specific gravity slightly lower than the crust so that they float comfortably on the SIMA seabed (Gen.1:9-10).
- Mature plants were created on Day 3, with seed in them.
- The heavenly bodies were created on Day 4.

- Animals were created in order on days 5 and 6.
- Humans were created last and given specific responsibilities.

The Genesis account has never been disproved at any point, despite positivist skepticism. In fact, it is supported by a host of ancient witnesses, and it is an important principle at law that those closest to an event may be predicted to know more about what happened than geology professors and cosmologists sitting in their offices several thousand years later.

Critical amongst the evidence is the ubiquitous physical evidence for the Noahic Flood (Genesis 7 to 9) and the strong tribal memory of the Flood found amongst all ethnic groups, e.g. the name of the Indian deity Krishna means ‘the man-Noah’ and the old Chinese symbol for a flood is a vessel with eight mouths (persons) in it (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961).

The ancient Chinese script, developed c. 2500-2400 BC, has extensive clear links to the Genesis account. For instance, the Chinese symbol for the ‘Spirit of God’ is clearly linked to the One who brooded over the waters (Gen.1:2). The symbolism is explicit. The three mouths are a clear reference to *Elohim*, the plural Hebrew word for ‘God’. Many other examples can be given, (see Kang & Nelson, 1979).

一 + 冂 + 水 = 雨 + 口口口 + 巫 = 靈
heaven cover water rain three person worker Spirit
person of magic

Spirit

(Kang & Nelson, 1979).

All in all, the Genesis account of creation remains strong in the face of all criticism. It is not in conflict with genuine science and the physical reality that surrounds us. And this being demonstrated we may proceed to think about God’s purposes in creating a universe that demonstrates his nature and glory.

GOD'S PURPOSES

Why did God create the universe? The apostle John reports that He created it '...for His own pleasure' (Rev.4:11). The Biblical revelation is that 'God loves the *cosmos*' (John 3:16) and Paul tells us that in Christ, God reconciled the whole *cosmos* to Himself (II Cor.2:19). Why the latter was necessary we shall see below. Suffice to say at this point is that God loves His creation and is keen to see it operating to His original specification (Eph.2:10).

This brings us to God's purpose for humans. Why were we created? Genesis 1:28 tells us: '...be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it (i.e. bring it to order, manage it)'. Genesis 2 expands the point: '...the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden... and took the man and put him in the garden' to till it, keep it and enjoy it (v.1-15). The command was no different after the Flood (Gen 9:1ff.), nor after the Cross (Eph.2:10). God's purpose for humans was that we should manage the *cosmos* on His behalf, *in cooperation with Him*.

My understanding is that God did not complete the job at the point of creation. The Earth was formed empty and un-managed. God created the original plants and animals and placed them in a pilot garden (Eden) which was both an example of what God wanted and a seed source. I hear God saying: 'This is what I want the whole earth to look like and I am giving you the task of getting the job done'. The whole thing to God was an adventure, not a completed package. Part of the pleasure for Him was to see humans at work, living in blessing and exercising their creative instincts with His encouragement. This is evidenced by His bringing the birds and animals to Adam to see what he would call them (Gen.2:19-20).

Our 'high calling' is to work in close harmony with the Almighty Creator to perfect the creation, not by our own will and resources but via the knowledge and creative power freely supplied by a benevolent Creator. God is a Spirit and in His plan humans were created to be the intermediary

between Himself and His creation. Clothed with a corporeal body, we are equipped to relate to the *cosmos* via the senses and, at the same time, being made in God's image, equipped to receive communications from Him. Augustine saw a hierarchy of beings: God-Angels-Humans-Animals-Plants-Inert Objects (Augustine, 1961). The crucial role for humanity is that God created us to be *the conjunction* (the joining point) between the spiritual and the corporeal worlds. We shall have a lot more to say about this in later chapters. In Eden our ancestors missed it badly but in Christ we have been reinstated to our proper place in order that we may fulfill God's original intentions. This, in a nutshell, is the Good News (The Gospel)! It goes beyond the Cross and beyond human reconstruction, although these are essential processes to bring us to the place where we may once again be a useful component of the *cosmos*.

CHAPTER 2

OUR HUMANITY – ONTOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

*“When I consider the heavens and the works of Thy hands...
what is man that Thou art mindful of Him? (Psalm 8)*

What the Psalmist is wondering about in Psalm 8 is ‘why God bothers with humans’. But that is an Old Testament theme; thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we now know that God ‘bothers with us’ because He loves His creation and wants to get things back on track according to His original purposes. For this to happen it was necessary for Him to reclaim the *cosmos* and put us back in our appointed place, to be His sons, working with Him to our mutual benefit. But to understand how this operates we need to ask the question, ‘what is a man’s nature’ (ontologically speaking) for this is crucial to understanding how we may have intimacy with God and enjoy a joy-filled on-going participation with Him.

When you think about it, it is surprising that we humans are constantly ‘present with ourselves’ (Taylor, 1989), even talk to ourselves, and yet seldom think about how we are constructed. Thankfully, some people have asked the crucial questions and there remain three dominant notions of what it means to be human. I shall call these, the *primal view*, the *positivist reductive (scientism) view* and the *Judeo-Christian view*.

THE PRIMAL VIEW OF HUMANITY

The Hellenes thought seriously about most things and it is not surprising that they developed an ontological theory for humanity. They prescribed that a human had a body (*soma*), a soul (*psyche*) and a spirit (*pneuma*). Not a great deal is recorded as to how they came to this view but a similar

view is found amongst modern primal groups, so we can turn to them for understanding how the common sense primal view may have developed. By primal I do not mean primitive. Rather, I refer to people who hold to traditional belief systems that hearken back to the beginning of time.

The BaPedi, a branch of the North Sotho people in Southern Africa, are a group holding to a primal view of humanity and Mönnig, a German missionary who lived amongst them for many years, has described how they derived it (Mönnig, 1988). The BaPedi started with the obvious: a human has a body (*soma* Greek; *m'mele* BaPedi). But a human body can be *alive or dead* so there must be another component. The Greeks saw this as a rational (thinking) component and called it the *psyche* but the BaPedi and other Bantu speaking African people simply call it the *moyo* or *moya*, i.e. 'the life'. But there is a further dimension, a human may be alive but still not feel empowered to get things done. The BaPedi put it this way: 'Sometimes I wake up and feel I cannot get out of bed – I say my *seriti* (spirit) has left me, it is traveling. Another day I wake up full of vigour – I say my *seriti* has returned'. (Not all African groups hold to the spirit notion. The Nguni people of Southern Africa hold to a simplified body/life notion (*m'mele/moyo*) prescription).

The Greeks spoke of the spirit as *pneuma* i.e. the wind. And this is close to a Christian view, for Jesus referred to this idea when He spoke to Nicodemus: 'The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound of it but cannot tell from where it is coming or where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit' (John 3:8). We will talk more about this later.

In Greek literature, the notion of *psyche* and *pneuma* are interchangeable, and it is the same with the BaPedi *moya* and *seriti*. Both are thought to be immaterial, as opposed to the body which is purely corporeal. The *moyo* is characterized by the BaPedi as follows: 'When a sick person stops breathing the *moya* is no longer present. When a voice is heard at night, the *moya* of a dead person is said to have spoken' (Mönnig, op cit). In life,

the *moya* is believed to be distributed throughout the body but to be strongest in the lungs (from which the breath originates), and the blood (without which the person dies). The *seriti* is characterized differently. Unlike the *moya*, which during life is irremovable from the body, the *seriti* may leave the body any time it chooses. (This is an important difference from the Judeo-Christian view. The BaPedi do not say how the *seriti* may be a human attribute yet still operate independently). Some people, particularly diviners, are believed to have great control over their *seriti*, sending it to make investigations of persons and places (*astral traveling?*). Witches, practitioners of the most advanced and malevolent form of African witchcraft, are notorious in this regard. They are believed to be able to change themselves into animals and to have sexual relations with men while they sleep. It is a fairly common experience for an African man to awaken naked and exhausted, far from home. Such happenings are assumed to be caused by witches.

The *seriti* is also connected with the idea of *shadow*. The BaPedi do not allow people who might harm them to walk on their shadow and it is considered bad manners to allow your shadow to fall on another's shadow. Similarly, diviners do not practice their art at mid-day for at this time there are hardly any shadows - the spirits of the dead are sleeping!

The attachment of the *seriti* to the body is assumed to be weaker when a person is sick or under the influence of alcohol or wild hemp (*Cannabis indica*). Tribal dignitaries are seen to have strong *seriti*, especially the Chief and the Medicine Man, whereas a person born into an insignificant family is said to have little or a weak *seriti*. However, there is the contradiction that when a person is installed as a Chief, their *seriti* is said to increase, and a poor person may increase their *seriti* by accumulating wealth. Because of such notions, the BaPedi are careful to keep their *seriti* protected from hostile external influences for it is upon this principle that the BaPedi notion of cause and effect rests. Love potions, amulets and *muti* sacks worn around the neck and wrist and stomach bands are viewed as essential to counteract the malevolent influences of others.

An important notion for the BaPedi is that the *moya* and *seriti* survive after death as a single entity. Some Ethiopian traditions assume that the after-life is located in the ground (e.g. the Zulus) but most say that it dwells in a shadow world located in the sky, specifically where the sun sets in the west. From this springs the whole tradition of the ancestors and the involvement of spirits in the affairs of the living.

THE POSITIVIST (REDUCTIVE) ACCOUNT OF HUMANNESS

“Knowledge begins with the examination of the real world, not with philosophical ideas about things which cannot be sensed” (Hippocratis).

It is in the nature of things that humans are obliged to examine the world around them, but to look is not necessarily to see and understand. In the 5th Century BC some Hellenes began to approach the matter of perception in a disciplined manner, taking the position that the *cosmos* may only be understood by *examination*. Philosophical ideas about the *cosmos* were dismissed along with the myths and legends that claimed the minds of the people of that time. At a later time this approach was labeled positivism or positivist scientism by Auguste Comte (1798-1857). It is a tradition that has profoundly influenced Western thinking to the present time. With regard to human ontology, positivism argues that, if we wish to know *what* humans are, we need to examine human bodies, doing away with theories like ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’, as these are fantasies that cannot be sensed or explained by corporeal processes. For the positivist, there is no life apart from chemical processes and nerve impulses, hence the term ‘reductive’ being applied to this view.

The Ionian ‘Dawn’

The 6th Century BC was a notable period. On the political front, the Egyptians regained control of Egypt, Cyrus the Mede (538 BC) permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-2), the Athenians (510 BC) established a notable form of democratic government called the *ecclesia* and six months later (509 BC) the Romans established a similar form of

government they called the *Senatus Populus Que Romanus* (SPQR), the Senate and People of Rome. These were busy and notable times in which one could be excused for not noticing that on the Aegean fringe of the Anatolian mainland three notable ‘scientists’ (*scientio*, Gk. = to know) had emerged. Together with a fourth person from Ephesus, these men birthed a science of natural philosophy aimed at providing a *purely naturalistic interpretation* of the universe. In its beginnings it had strong ties with the common sense view but over time it developed principles that led it to hypothesize a very uncommon view of the world around us. In what follows I am indebted to Professor Michael Stanton of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Thales is regarded as the founder of the positivist school. To him is attributed the proposition of the First Principle that *everything is derived from water*. The earth he saw to be a flat disk floating on water, with water above (where else could the rain come from) and water vapour all around. The sun, moon and stars he hypothesised to be vapour in a state of incandescence.

A second figure of importance was Anaximander. He worked from the proposition that natural things consist of four elements *deriving from a common indeterminate primordial substance*. These elements he saw to be stratified: *water* (the sea) floated on *earth*, *mist* (air) sat on water and *fire* (the active element) was all encompassing. As pressure built up in the primordial substance, the ‘skin’ broke to form wheels of fire enclosed in tubes of mist that encircle the earth. Holes in the mist allow us to see the fire inside as heavenly bodies. An eclipse is simply the partial or complete closing of one of these holes. Anaximander argued that fish were the first animals - that, as the earth dried, fish adapted to produce land animals and eventually humans. In his proposal of a common indeterminate substance and his evolutionary view of the development of life, Anaximander was innovative in the extreme. His hypothesis of a primordial substance anticipated the Big Bang Theory of modern physics and his evolutionary hypothesis looked forward to Darwinism.

The third great Miletian natural scientist was Anaximenes. He plumped for *mist* as the First Principle. He saw mist getting harder as more of it was packed into a confined space, producing first water and then earth. That is, he hypothesised *rarefaction* and *condensation* as the crucial processes in the transformation of matter and noted the involvement of fire in these processes; heat accompanies rarefaction and cold accompanies condensation.

The fourth Ionian of note was Heraclitis of Ephesus. He proposed fire as the First Principle but his main contribution was to provide an explanation of ‘why things stay where they are’ via an hypothesis of *tension*. Taking his cue from the strings of a bow or lyre, he argued that there is a force in matter that moves elements on an *upward path to fire* and an opposite force that *moves them down to earth*. Existence is dictated by a balance of these forces – everything flows!

Hippocratic Medicine and the Full Emergence of Positivist Science

The foundational work of the Ionian natural scientists led other workers to develop a positivist approach to healing. The move is attributed to Hippocratis but there were several other positivist schools of healing in Greece at the time, all of them in conflict with the other healing practices of the times: prayer to the gods, gymnasia, and philosophical counseling.

With regard to prayer, many Greeks in the 6th Century BC believed that healing was available via the god Aesculapius (the god of life and death = the Hindu Shiva) whose sign is the serpent (after Moses in the Wilderness, Numbers 21:9). The priests of Aesculapius survived by persuading humans that diseases and misfortune were the direct result of divine judgment and that cures could only be gained by placating the gods. While some Ionians chose to have nothing to do with myths and magic countless others followed the Aesculapian tradition, especially when they became ill! And we note that attributing sickness to God’s judgment is evident in our own time, even amongst sophisticated Westerners!

Greek gymnasia attendants had an extraordinary knowledge of human anatomy. They provided massage, direct interventions in the case of dislocations and sound advice on diet and systems of exercise. The Hippocratic tradition was helped in that gymnasia attendants were often extremely rough with patients, probably because the general populace regarded them as menials!

The *a priori* notions of philosophers also played a part in healing. The Pythagorean School thought the number 4 was crucial. Building on their mathematical reflections, they identified *four powers* in humans: the power to reproduce, the power to grow, the power to sense and the power to reason. These were seen from nature to be a hierarchy in that plants had the first two, animals the first three and humans all four. This hierarchy they saw further confirmed by their *position* in the human body. The sexual organs were regarded as the lowest power (and ‘dirty’ by their association with excretion), the power to grow was in the navel, emotions and feelings were in the heart and reason in the brain (the highest power). This thinking led to the notion that a human is not one entity but a composite being evidencing several parts and powers of a distinctive kind. These ideas are still with us, e.g. we still speak of ‘higher education’ and in some quarters sexual activity is still regarded as unmentionable.

The Hippocratic schools discarded all the above on the ground that they were inadequate for dispensing healing and tended to treat patients as objects rather than persons. The Hippocratic Oath required physicians to be *caring*. They had several objections to philosophical physiology. Firstly they argued that philosophical ideas are *unnecessary* seeing healers have all the means at hand to discover principles and methods and to determine which of them are useful for relieving sickness and pain. Secondly, they found philosophical views *too narrow in diagnosis*. In fact, Hippocratic technicians were appalled at the sheer ignorance of philosophers, who seemed not to know that:

‘...it makes a difference to a man’s body whether the bread be of bolted

or unbolted flour, whether it be winnowed or un-winnowed wheat, whether it be kneaded with much water or little, whether it be thoroughly baked or under baked. Each of these differences produces in a human an effect and a change of one sort or another, and upon these differences is based all dieting of humans, whether the patient be in health, convalescent or ill' (Farrington, 1953).

Thirdly, for the Hippocratic technician, *a technique must give a result* if it is to be taken seriously. If something worked it was proof that the technician understood nature. It was one thing for the philosopher to build a cosmology out of the observation that water could become ice under certain conditions - a doctor's ideas were constantly *under test in real life situations*. For the Hippocratic Schools the *first duty* was to *heal the sick*, not to study disease.

Hippocratic medicine reinforced the positivist scientific method by its practice of addressing sensation first and intellect second but it did allow that through experience one may devise a theory and subsequently a law. In medical science terms this may be stated as follows: (1) observation and experimentation are the way to discover the truth about human nature, not *a priori* propositions; (2) the criticism that internal complaints cannot be observed is met by arguing that what escapes the eyesight may be mastered by the 'eye of the mind'; the attendant can diagnose dysfunctions by reasoning based on symptoms such as roughness or clearness of voice, rapidity of respiration, and the character of discharges - smell, colour, etc.; and (3) the healing arts are aided by compulsions that constrain the body to give up its secrets, e.g. getting the patient to run up a hill. In the early 21st Century, Hippocratic medical practitioners hold fast to the above principles and by so doing maintain for themselves an honoured place in human society, not only because there is an on-going need for health intervention but because they have persuaded us that the way to health is established through the scientific method. This has led to the view that a high degree of intellect and much study is required for diagnostic reasoning and medicos still build their reputation on the need

for caring. Strangely, the profession has taken as its logo the sign of Aesculapius. Seemingly nothing has been left to chance!

The persistence of positivist thought in modern societies creates the ground for funding on-going medical research, for by this view it is by research only that the nature of our bodies (which to the positivist is equivalent to ‘our selves’) will be better understood. Of course, in making these comments we are speaking of the Western world, not the primal world where commonsense notions that disease is predicated on spiritual malevolence dominate. The two views of our nature survive side by side. Both have this distinction – they are hierarchical views that cannot be understood by the rank and file; years of study must be undertaken if a person wishes to practice as a *sangoma* or become a Western medical doctor.

The Problem for Observational Science

In their rejection of any form of magical intervention the Ionians looked forward to the Abbe Simon, Francis Bacon, Auguste Comte and the reductive sensationalism of Bentham, Darwin and Ernst Mach in the 19th Century AD. But were they justified in so quickly rejecting theorising? The Ionian position is weakened by its need to *invent abstract terms* to explain phenomena. Water and earth become *liquid* and *solid* and words like *rarefaction* and *tension* are definitely not concrete terms. Heraclitis recognised that ‘the eyes and ears are a bad witness if the mind cannot interpret what they say’ and, as Farrington (op cit) notes: ‘...once the distinction becomes clear, there is bound to be controversy as to which of the two, sense or reason, is the true method of approach to the understanding of nature’. The battle continues to the present time.

The body/mind problem is a case in point. Positivists are united in the belief that the human is solely a corporeal being but when it comes to the mind they have prescribed four contradictory positions: (1) the Radical Materialist View which states that mental events are illusionary and body-

mind problem not a problem at all; (2) the Pan-Psychist View which argues that all matter exists with a mental or proto-psychical state, and therefore, being integral with matter, mental activity can have neither any independent existence from matter nor exert any influence upon it, e.g. you cannot cure a cold by positive thinking; (3) the Epiphenomenalist View which sees mental states existing in relation to material happenings but saying nothing about causes, e.g. the football that I have may have been used by a super star but because I own it does not make me an expert footballer; and (4) the Identity, Central State or Psycho-Neural Identity View which sees mental states existing as an inner aspect of material structures such as the brain nerve cells and neural actions and providing a sufficient explanation of brain-mind responses. All of these views are materialistic in that each of them safeguards the closed-ness of the material world; any suggestion of an immaterial self (soul or spirit) is categorically denied. At most, it is allowed that the conscious self, if such a thing exists, must be located in the neural tissue.

Many positivists take the view that the mind is solely associated with the brain. If this is so, it should be possible to discover which part of the brain is the most likely part for the mind to be located. Sir John Eccles, an Australian neurosurgeon, neurologist and Nobel Prize winner, spent a lifetime examining and operating on the brain. His conclusion was that, while it was clear that the human mind had no access to the corporeal world but *through* the brain, ‘the happenings in the neural machinery of the brain do not provide a necessary or sufficient explanation of the totality of the performance and the conscious experience of the human’ (Eccles, 1981).

By the use of radio tracer techniques, Eccles showed that the brain mantle, the *neo-cortex*, is composed of about ten thousand million neural cells oriented in modular columns running vertically in a 3mm thick layer. The immense potential of these two to three million modules may be grasped by comparing them with the potential of the eighty-six keys of a piano. But like the piano, independent modular events must be coordinated and it

is significant that nowhere in the brain is there any mechanism for integrating the energy contained in the modules to coherent information. Each brain event is disparate, causing Eccles to argue that the mind must be immaterial and materialist views of the human are essentially denied. But it remains difficult to convince the positivists!

THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN VIEW

In contrast to the primal and positivist views, the Judeo-Christian view of humanness provides an easily understood and profoundly practical explanation that relates well with common experience. It is like Newton's Laws of Motion – once you see it, you find it difficult to understand why you did not see it before! Charles Taylor, a leading philosopher in our time, has traced the history of Western man's efforts to understand his nature in a monograph entitled 'Sources of the Self' (Taylor, 1989). His ultimate conclusion was that there is a 'large element of hope implicit in Judeo-Christian thought with its central promise of a divine affirmation of the human, more total than humans can ever attain unaided'. In other words, in his view, we need God's help if we want to know what we are!

The Biblical understanding of humanness is that we are constructed to be the temple/dwelling place of God (I Cor.6:13-20). Paul tells us that this was always God's plan but only revealed after Christ had completed the work of redemption (Col.1:27). What does it mean to be a temple? To understand this we need to look no further than the Tabernacle in the Wilderness (Ex.25-40), for this provides a comprehensive explanation of how God intended that we should relate to Him. There are many points of interest in the Tabernacle but the essential features are shown in Fig.1. There is an outer court with a gate, a bronze sacrificial altar, a bronze laver for washing and a container of oil for anointing those called to serve in the Holy Place. Inside the Tabernacle proper are found: (1) a Holy Place with furniture made of gold - a Table for Showbread, a seven candle Menorah (Lampstand) and an Altar for burning incense; and (2) a Most Holy Place containing the Ark of the Covenant overshadowed by two

golden seraphim and containing the Tablets of the Law, Aaron's staff and a pot of manna.

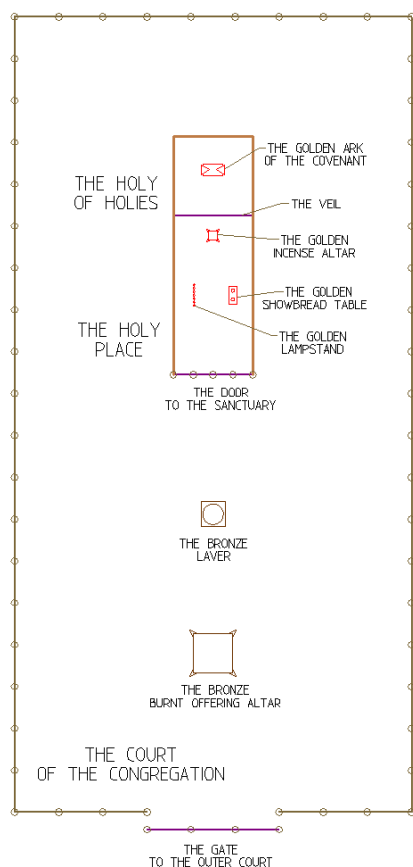


Fig.1: The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

It is clear that the Tabernacle in the Wilderness could not have been built to be a meeting place to house the Church in the Wilderness, for the nation of Israel at the time numbered three million people. Rather, the Tabernacle was constructed as a place *for God to dwell amongst His people*, and this is confirmed by the fact that as soon as the Tabernacle was completed it was filled with the *Shekinah* Glory (Ex.40:33-35).

Solomon's Temple, constructed to the same pattern, was also filled with the presence of God at its initiation service (I Kings 8:10-11). And at Pentecost, AD 29, the disciples of Jesus were similarly filled with the Holy Spirit as evidenced by them speaking in unknown tongues. From this evidence we conclude that a human has an outer court (body), a 'holy place' (soul, a rational being) and a 'most holy place' or spirit, a place reserved for the presence of God - a conclusion that has strong links with the Primal view described above.

We are all aware that a human has a body and we can thank positivist medical science for an expanding view of its astounding complexity and perfection (see Brand, 1980). We also find humans thinking and reasoning with the firm conviction that by this means they can control and even change the circumstances of their lives – eliminating hostilities and enhancing the good. Over time, philosophers, psychologists and educationalists have recognized that there are different levels of thinking. The first level, sensory perception is automatic; St Augustine (1961) called it the *anima*, i.e. the vital principle – if we are not dead we are sensing. The second level is thinking about what we sense (the *animus* – the thinking principle). The task for the educationalist is to motivate individuals to exercise this faculty, for we do not think about everything we sense, rather we are selective. For instance, when driving a car, we see many things but only take note of certain things; it may be a street we need to find or an irresponsible driver whom we wish to avoid for fear of a collision. This leads us to a third level of thought, the *ratio*, that which distinguishes and interprets what we are sensing and a fourth attribute, the *men's*, the spring of action. The Judeo-Christian position is that all of this thinking occurs in the soul, an immaterial rational being in which the *animus*, *ratio* and *men's* are located. But Augustine prescribes a fourth immaterial faculty – the *intellectus*, the faculty which may be enlightened by God. This is explicit in his description of his own ontological/epistemological journey:

“...By degrees I passed from corporeal bodies to the soul, which

through the bodily senses perceives. Then to the inner faculty that receives representations from the senses... and then to the reasoning faculty by which what is received from the senses is referred to be judged. Here I found a problem in that judgment was a thing most variable. Within myself I cried out that the unchangeable was preferable to the changeable... and thus, with the flash of one trembling glance I arrived at That Which Is... there at last catching sight of your invisible nature as it is known throughout all creation” (Versveld 1990)

This last step was for Augustine what Christians call the re-birth, the discovery of the *Logos* within. Nothing is the same after that experience. Now we know that we are not alone. The Creator Himself has whispered: ‘I am here’! Regrettably, not everyone enjoys this blissful state. Some people are ‘alive’ but do not have the in-dwelling Spirit. Their human spirit is empty and inoperative. We say that such a person is living *in sin*. (NB Sin is not ‘acts’; it is a ‘state of separation’ – there is much confusion about this in the minds of Christians and non-Christians alike). Being cut off from God they have no way of knowing that God exists, let alone experience His fellowship. That this state is possible is confirmed by Jesus who said ‘You must be born again’ (John 3:3). Paul confirms this: ‘If a man does not have the Spirit of Christ then he does not belong to Him’ (Rom.8:9). Such a person remains a ‘natural man’, the only information he has comes from the external via the senses.

Some people are *born again* but not *Spirit filled*, i.e. they have the Holy Spirit within (in their spirit) but are not aware of it. This is explicit in John 3:3: a person may *see* the reality of the Kingdom of God (John 3:3) but not ‘know’ God first hand. If we are to ‘know’ God the veil between the spirit and soul must be rent. The veil was incorporated by God to prevent a spirit other than the Spirit of God entering the human spirit. Even we cannot penetrate this region of our person (I Cor.2:11). Think about it, what can you tell me about your spirit?

Some people have *entered* into the *experience* of the Kingdom by the

tearing of the veil (John 3:5). When Jesus died the veil of the Jerusalem Temple was rent from top to bottom (Matt.27:51-54), i.e. God did it. In the same way, the Holy Spirit can be guaranteed to break through the veil of every individual that seeks Him, *in His timing*. This happening sets up possibilities for regular communication between God and the *psyche* of the person concerned. Such a person is *born of water and the Spirit*; they experience a ‘regenerative washing’ and a flow of ‘anointing’ which results in an inner cleansing and the renewing of the mind (John 3:5, Titus 3:5). Out of their belly (Gk. *koilia*) flows a river of living water (John 7:37-39)!

The renewed human continues to relate to the *cosmos* via the senses but judges all things via eternal standards found within. Descartes argued that the senses deceive us but Augustine saw nothing of the kind. He saw the body created ‘very good’ and the senses reporting faithfully within their capability. His picture of the good life is as follows:

“God dwells in His unchanging unity. His perfection radiates in an ever increasing multiplicity, shot through by forms of beauty, goodness and truth. Number and harmony inhabit and form the reality of the world of bodies. Man is a kind of high priest of nature whose soul is knit to a body to watch over the creature. The senses of his body have contact with the external world but within himself he hears the concord of their numbers with truth and is enabled, because absolute truth sets the measure within, to verify the unchanging in the passing sounds within and without” (D’Arcy, 1957).

Within the human soul, there is an ubiquitous searching for understanding and enjoyment. But, if the soul is isolated from God the search is fruitless. Left to itself, the soul is unable to comprehend either itself or the world around it. It is doomed to wander the earth seeking answers via the senses, giving the body mastery. And the body, having no life in itself, becomes

undisciplined, its desires rampant, the organs of procreation become organs of shame (Gen.3:7).

The redeemed soul experiences the same pressures and temptations as the natural man but, in addition, finds within a struggle in the will – to obey the carnal or the spiritual. This has the potential to tear the soul in two, so the rational strategy is to take the way of escape – to reject the carnal and live out the interior life!

Augustine saw the inner experience of the love of God transforming the desires. He saw the reborn human continuing to experience fear, desire, pain and gladness but finding no condemnation in these things. He rejected the Epicurean delight in pleasure at all costs, and the Stoic pursuit of mental accomplishment for its own sake. He saw human welfare best served by bringing both body and soul into harmony with God's purposes. Such submission, in his view, did not deny human agency, rather it provided possibilities otherwise denied (Augustine, 1961).

This is what John the Apostle was talking about when he said that to 'as many as received Him to them gave the authority to become the sons of God' (John 1:12). Jesus is our example: 'The Son does nothing of Himself, whatever He sees the Father doing, this also does the Son in the same manner' (John 5:19). 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God' (I John 3:1). Some translations say 'children of God', but why argue about it? Whether sons or children, the important thing is that we are in God's family, drawing on an intimate relationship set up within us by the *Logos* Himself; finding the authority/power we need to live constructively and compassionately in a dysfunctional world.

CHAPTER 3

OUR HUMANITY – PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

“As a man thinks... so is he” (Prov.23:70)

In our discussion of the Judeo-Christian revelation of human nature we moved quite a long way into matters concerning the soul. We did not do this under the primal and positivist accounts because those accounts have little or nothing to say about such matters. In this chapter we want to explore some of the outcomes in human thought life that develop as a result of walking in one or other of the ontological models described above. But before we do that we need to remind ourselves once again that un-redeemed humans have a major psychological problem in that, being cut off from God, they can only relate to reality via the senses. This means that they are essentially cut off from each other's minds and feelings. Such matters can only be guessed at, and this has important implications for communication, relationships and, above all, learning.

But before proceeding further, we need to remember that problems of individual isolation are exacerbated by the 'knowledge of good and evil'. God instructed the first humans not to eat the fruit of that tree (Genesis 2:17), but they did eat it (3:6-7) and as a result lost 'their first estate'. No-one has described the result better than Sigmund Freud (Freud, 1991). Freud was a product of nineteenth century positivism and, having rejected any notion of the supernatural, he went on to construct a general psychological theory from common sense observation and positivist thinking. First he saw that humans were motivated by two basic instincts, to survive and to possess objects. But these instincts he saw were frustrated by others, in the first instance by parents who introduced the child to the idea that some actions are good and others are evil. In time, he

saw humans constructing for themselves a set of rules by which they judged their own actions and thoughts, the super-ego judging the ego. When they were obeying the inner law (conscience) they had a sense of well-being; when they were acting contrary to the inner law they felt guilty. The hero of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérable* had a maid who 'never told a lie', but she did lie to protect the hero from the Inspector and this left her greatly troubled. The hero told her that her lie would grace the doors of heaven but she could not believe it. We have all known condemnation, and the redeemed know what grace it is to be delivered from it.

Freud saw un-redeemed humanity escaping condemnation only by distractions: throwing themselves into work, doing good deeds, loving oneself (narcissism) or drinking beer! But humans have constructed much more complex ways of avoiding guilt, viz: (1) aligning actions with traditions; (2) practising religion; or (3) eliminating God and a troubling conscience altogether. We will look at each of these practices below and the temporary relief they provide, in contrast with God's provision: a one shot deliverance from condemnation for eternity.

LIVING BY TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

Primal peoples have derived an ingenious way of escaping from condemnation - they live by the precepts of tribal tradition, the 'way we do things'. It is crucial to a primal person that they be free of blame, for blame opens the door for malevolence and the wrath of the ancestors. The way out is to conform to the norms and *know* your actions are beyond criticism. You feel safe then, free in your mind.

Primal traditions are complex – there is a rule for everything, nothing is left to chance. Traditions are taught systematically. Children learn from their mothers in the early stages of their development then, at age 7, they are committed to practical tasks that bring about positive concrete learning. In Africa, girls undertake domestic tasks and boys look after

cattle. At puberty, both girls and boys are introduced to adult practices in highly specialized initiation schools. Here they learn ‘what adults do’; and, by having every last ounce of independence and lateral thinking smashed out of them, they become committed to following tribal ways and norms. In Africa, circumcision of both males and females is the focal point of the initiation process. When I asked one young man what he learned in the initiation school he said: ‘we learned how to manage women but later we discovered that it is not as easy as they told us!’

This primal practice of ordered instruction is a far cry from the *laissez-faire* education that has become popular in the West. Educators will find it of interest that the stages of development recognized by primal peoples are congruent with those defined by the Swiss educational psychologist Jean Piaget (Piaget, 1981).

Primal people are not judged to be fully adult until they reach the age of thirty but after initiation there is much to do helping the tribal elders in the daily tasks of community management. This follows the pattern of old Israel where the Levites were numbered from 30 years and upwards (I Chron.23:3), and King David had by special permission from Jehovah engaged 20-30 year olds ‘to assist the priests’ (I Chron.23:27-32).

Richardson sees the notion of conforming to traditional practices coming from an underlying holism in primal thought. Unlike Western thinking, which tends to be decidedly dualistic, primal thinking sees the togetherness of things. There is a stress on interdependence and harmony among people and between humans and their environment. ‘It is assumed that all things are in a natural balance and that every disruption has a specific cause which can (and must) be detected and put to rights so that harmony and equilibrium may be maintained’ (Richardson, 1998). Not that the natural harmony of things is considered by primal peoples to be a neutral or fixed state, but the individual’s *seriti* (‘life-force’) is seen to be limited by station and individuals see their welfare highly dependent on the *combined* spiritual, physical and economic strength of the family or

clan. The idea is strongly inculcated in the young adult mind that 'my well-being' is inevitably bound up with the 'welfare of others'. The possibility of an individual destiny is strongly denied.

Traditional life is filled with rituals (ceremonies) that have the pragmatic aim of maintaining or even increasing the clan's *collective* life-force. Such rituals are sometimes regarded by Western observers as religious, but primal peoples do not see them as such, for they do not distinguish the religious from the secular. The assumption in rituals is an optimistic one; the idea that more of the life-force is available if the clan approaches the forces operating the *cosmos* in the right way. This has implications for the individual in that the vital force operating in the clan is seen to be *the summation* of the *seriti* in individuals. Before the birth of each baby and at key points throughout their life, even after their death, certain rituals must be observed if the life-force is to be maximized. The Zulu *imbelelo* ceremony in which the name of the newly born is communicated to the ancestors is a case in point (Richardson op cit).

As we have seen, the ancestors are assumed to be located in the heavens, but this does not mean that they are isolated from clan members operating on planet earth. On the contrary, though unable to physically interfere with affairs on the ground, they are understood to serve the useful function of providing an ever-present authority with regard to tribal traditions. This is important, because, to escape condemnation and keep the clan safe from malevolence, tribal decisions are not made opportunistically but according to what tradition dictates. If a question is raised, the tradition approved by the ancestors is referenced and this provides the tribal elders with authority to decree how things must be done. It is normal for clan members to accept this view without dissent, for obeying the authority of tradition provides a way by which a person may judge that their actions are 'good' and escape from feelings of condemnation and fear.

But the ancestors serve another important function. They are the channel

that the clan uses to seek assistance from the Creator. (All tribal groups have a pantheon of gods and one of these is designated the ‘creator god’. The name used amongst the Achewa in Central Africa is *Mulungu*). It is understood that God is far away and cannot be reached by earth’s inhabitants, but the ancestors, being in the heavens, are close to God and able to intercede on behalf of their earth-bound relatives. It is upon this understanding that tribal chiefs and village headmen make offerings to the ancestors as a monthly ritual, communicating to the ancestors the current needs of their communities in the hope that the ancestors will pass on their petitions to the Great One. Every village and tribe has a special place where this occurs; it is usually a high place, if one is available. The timing is usually the new moon – the Festival of the New Moon (I Samuel 20).

A friend of mine, when working as a missionary in the Congo, happened to reach a large tribe for the first time right on the new moon. He was met by a number of minor dignitaries and asked to wait because the Paramount Chief was busy celebrating the Moon Festival. Noticing a group of men seated in a circle in the distance, and feeling impressed by the Holy Spirit to approach them, my friend moved forward. On reaching the rise he was greeted by the Chief with dignity and asked to sit in a chair until the ritual was concluded. To my friend’s astonishment, the chief picked up a piece of bread made of cassava, held it to the heavens and cried out, ‘We do this in the name of the Great One whose name we have forgotten’. The bread was then circulated amongst the elders who each ate a portion. The chief then took a cup of maize beer and repeated the statement, “We do this in the name of the Great One whose name we have forgotten’. The cup was similarly passed to the gathered elders. This Festival of the Moon celebration, including the ceremony of the bread and wine, is ubiquitous amongst primal peoples. Needless to say, when asked to speak, my friend was happy to announce that he ‘knew the name of the Great One!’ Primal elders do not pray *to* the ancestors, they pray *through* them, in the same way that orthodox Christians pray through departed Saints.

It seems that all primal groups have a tradition of ‘the bread and the cup’.

Colonel Hal Oxley tells the story of his encounter with a Bedouin Sheikh during the Second World War. When his troops were camped close to a Bedouin tent town, Hal was invited to meet the sheikh. When he entered the sheikh's tent he was led to a place where the sheikh offered him bread and wine in the communion manner. Neither of the participants could speak the other's language so the ceremony was conducted without conversation. The matter concluded, the sheikh left and Hal was conducted back to the outside world. The interpreter asked him if he knew what had happened. "The sheikh has shared the bread and wine with you; you and your men are now under his protection".

Now, in the primal understanding, a departed ancestor's position in the heavens is dictated by two things: their quality of life on earth and the singing of their spirit after death. If an ancestor has lived an exemplary life it is understood that it is possible for them to dwell closer to the Creator than a person who has spent their life practising evil. If the relatives of the dead 'sing the spirit' well, it is likely that their *moya/seriti* will finish up closer to God than if no singing is done at all. So, at funerals in primal communities, people calling themselves Christians sing Christian hymns, not so much to glorify God but to ensure that grandma's spirit finishes up close to the Creator, for this is seen to be crucial for the health of the tribe. Besides, nobody wants the grandma's spirit hanging around the camp!

The problem for the primal position is that, while the life-force may be maintained, even increased, by the rituals, there is no place for innovation and little opportunity for individuals to improve their economic position or social status. For, while the presence of the ancestors may have benefits for the tribe as a whole, they can be a distinct source of frustration for the individual. This begins at an early age. In an African village, holism dictates that 'all the children are our children' and every child may be disciplined by any adult who finds them straying from the tribal norms. Even if you can find a spot where you are totally alone, the ancestors are watching!

Primal peoples have a problem relating to the Western economic system. If a primal person finds paid employment it will be taken for granted that their salary will be available to satisfy the needs of the whole clan. This becomes a powerful disincentive to work and many individuals abandon school and paid work in favour of spending days fishing or hunting with clan friends. For, dissociating oneself from the clan is not an option if one believes that an individual's life-force is insufficient to sustain life against the malevolent forces.

In the same way, individual clans see their combined life-force to be limited. In the case that their political leaders are tyrannical, they assume that nothing can be done, for the leader is understood to have even more *seriti* than a clan and even all clans combined. In such circumstances, the only thing that can be done is to wait for the tyrant to die. Political action is not attempted because it is seen to be hopeless. Western politicians fail to understand this because their assumptions are entirely different.

So the life of the ordinary primal tribal person works itself out in an unthinking obedience to traditional prescriptions and duties. No allowance is made for new information. For instance, it is difficult to persuade primal people that disease may be caused by micro-organisms. (I have seen African women collect water for domestic use from puddles in which dog faeces are floating. We have also heard an educated South African President advising his constituency that Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is due to poverty and a Minister of Health suggesting beetroot juice as a cure. South African *sangomas*/witch-doctors regularly advise that AIDS can be controlled by raping a child or a white woman).

Primal people see death coming by the action of some hostile person, for death is seen to be a diminution of the collective 'life-force' and this could not be caused by God (for He is Good) or the ancestors (for they are benevolent as long as the rituals are maintained). No, death indicates a deliberate action on the part of some human bent on doing the group harm and it is important to turn up at the funeral of a relative, otherwise you

may be blamed for the death. This view is not so different from Augustine and Thomas who saw evil as the absence of goodness:

‘...if a human fault can be indicated by the metaphors of the contractions of soul and of interests, and its consequences as improper relations of ourselves and all things to God, the correction can be indicated by an enlargement of soul (life-force) ...and by a more appropriate alignment of ourselves and all things in relation to each other and the ultimate power and orderer of life (Gustafson 1981).

The West always sees education and training as the answer to the lack of development in primal communities but the pattern is set at the mother’s knee and the initiation schools make doubly sure that the traditions hold sway when a primal person moves into adulthood. In Piaget’s terms, *formal operations* are bypassed. Changing practice is the farthest thing from a primal person’s mind.

PRACTISING RELIGION

As we have seen, there is an ever present predisposition to condemnation in the human psyche. This arises not only from the action of a super-ego but from an inbuilt fear in the un-redeemed human soul that it is exposed to God’s judgments. In times of good circumstances such thoughts may be buried and forgotten but they are very much inclined to re-surface in times of calamity. After the Sumatran *sunami* in 2003, people around the world gave extremely generously to the relief work. One suspects that this was not due to an excessive benevolence but because the event was so large (shaking the earth on its axis) that it was taken to be an act of God - although nobody said so. When God is seen to have acted, people have a desperate need to do something to set things right, even if, in good times, they claim not to believe in Him. The same thing happened after the universal Flood of Noah, a *sunami* of monstrous proportions. (Halle calculated that the seismic wave must have been a mile high and traveling

at 1600km/hour when it hit the land plates). Humanity was left in a state of tension. God had taken action against a disobedient humanity and the question was: ‘would He do it again?’. The rainbow offered comfort, but this was a promise to those who ‘walked with God’, not to those who walked in disobedience. That Noah and Shem walked with God in the early post-Flood days is evident and the scripture reports that even Pharaohs and pagan Kings had a healthy respect for God at that time (e.g. Genesis 20). But, walking with God or not, it is apparent that condemnation continued to be the common experience. And this opened a door of opportunity for some people to set up religious systems that offered ways and means by which people might placate God’s wrath. The system developed in Babylon (c. 2200 BC) was the most successful (Potter 1993). It derived its success from two principles: Manichean Philosophy and Confession.

Manichean Philosophy

As mentioned above, a fundamental problem for unredeemed humans is that they judge their own actions according to an ‘inner law’ that they create for themselves (Freud 1991). Once this process takes root in a person’s psyche it is a natural tendency for them to carry a load of self-imposed guilt and feelings of inadequacy (‘sinfulness’) because, being ‘slaves to the appetites of the flesh’ in their thought life they see themselves to be evil. The Manichean view provides an escape from the problem by arguing that it is *the body that is evil*, while *the soul is potentially good*. Pythagorus is attributed with bringing the Manichean philosophy from Babylonia to Greece in the 5th Century BC. I have already mentioned that the Pythagorean School saw sexual organs as ‘low and dirty’. They remain so for many ‘good’ Western people today.

Once the Manichean notion is accepted it becomes clear that the good life consists of separating oneself from the appetites of the flesh in order to concentrate on improving the soul. Plato and his associates prided themselves that in pursuing philosophy they were making real progress,

not only in escaping from the fallen corporeal world but in determining for themselves a bright future. For, in their view, a soul purified by philosophical edification could aim to be appointed to the exalted office of a god, hence ideas like ‘higher thought’ and ‘higher education’ survive in academic circles in our day. Academy members rejoiced that they were not like other men, destined to undertake menial chores like washing clothes and preparing food, for they had slaves to wait upon them.

Slaves were justified by the Platonic School by declaring that some humans were inferior beings. Such a view was predicated on the evolutionary notions of Anaximander (above) in the same way that, in the 19th Century, European colonizers used Darwinian evolutionary propositions to back their argument that dark skinned people were not only inferior but actually sub-human – crosses between humans and animals. I have heard English missionaries state as much and anthropologists in the West are still doing research on the thickness of human skulls in the hope that they may prove that Negroid skulls are thicker than those of Caucasians. How skull thickness equates with intelligence is entirely uncertain but that does not deter the evolutionists from pursuing their project. Plato’s Academy went further, pronouncing women to be a cosmic error, forced on the gods by the failure of men to edify themselves. Needless to say they moved into homosexual practices, the flesh not retiring as quickly as might be hoped! They lived in a puffed-up state of *self-righteousness*, seeing themselves as ‘good’ because they denied the flesh and pursued higher ideals.

Putting down of the flesh is evident wherever the trappings of religion are found, although it is a position that proves hard to maintain. Many who fled to monasteries in mediaeval times resorted to fasting and flagellation when the flesh ‘reared its ugly head’. There was even a Flagellant Movement in Europe c.1260 AD (Cohn, 1970). The Inquisition in Europe is another Manichean case in point. People were burnt to death by the Christian Church, *not* as punishment but as a means of delivering their good soul from their evil flesh (I Cor.5:1-8). (For information on the

Mediaeval Manichee, see Runciman, 1983). The Puritans proclaimed the Ordinary Life (work, marriage and sexuality, child-raising, etc.) to have been ordained by God but the old dualism remains a powerful influence in Western society. Amongst those who sit in Christian Church pews on Sundays in our time you will find many who persist in the Manichean view. There is one thing about this that appeals. People who believe in putting down the flesh tend to behave better than those who have a complete disregard for disciplining their natural appetites. Perhaps this is a case of the Law being the school master that brings us to Christ (Gal.4:23-26).

Confession

Some people cannot accept the thesis that the soul is essentially good. They persist in feeling that their thought life is offensive, and guilt derived from actions perceived to be evil is commonly experienced. Anthropological studies provide evidence that most human groups practice religious ordinances aimed at satisfying the gods and delivering the mind from a guilty conscience. And the vast majority of them show a definite pattern: *confession*, *penance* and *absolution*. For instance, when the Greeks sought guidance from the oracle at Delphi or the Oasis of Siwa, they were instructed by the priests that confession was an absolute necessity prior to appearing before a righteous God. Seekers were told to dig deep because the oracle would not be deceived by those who kept back secret indiscretions. In this way the priests at the sacred sites gained enormous power over the populace - they 'knew things'. Of course, discretion was absolutely necessary on the priest's part, otherwise no one would turn up to confess, and this would have serious implications for the livelihood of the priests who lived on the penances prescribed by the oracle. It was a good system. The local population felt better for having confessed and the priests made a good living from a valued service.

It is hardly necessary to state that the Orthodox Church has carried the process forward, continuing to offer a 'way out' of the predicament of

condemnation by providing a process of confession and penance leading to forgiveness. However, under this model forgiveness is temporary - to sustain 'salvation' a person is obliged to confess and be forgiven at least once per week. By this means, local priests are able to build up information banks as to the moral history of every person in their community. Ensuring the priest's silence becomes paramount, and what better way of ensuring that than by donating goods and money towards their general welfare. Of course, if you have the means, you may build a cathedral! Over time, various acts have been prescribed to assist people obtain heaven *by their own acts*. Regrettably, many who attend evangelical Christian churches and are critical of the old churches continue to carry with them the same apostate notions. The preacher proclaims grace but the message fails to liberate the flock from the judgments of their super-ego. Perhaps the old church has the right idea after all – providing a means of escape until such time as God reveals His grace to the believer via the New Covenant experience (Jer.31:33-34, Heb.8:10-12) - see below.

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There is another commonsense notion that supports confession: the assumption that *ordinary* people cannot communicate with God, that this duty is reserved for special people whom God has elected to be His associates. The book of Genesis seems to suggest that Shem was one of these (Gen.9:26) and it has followed that every religion under heaven has a priest caste. The old churches practise priest craft from the top down but the evangelical churches are not immune from it. I commonly meet pastors who see themselves as God's mouthpiece, 'the anointed one'; if you miss the sermon on Sunday, you miss hearing what God wishes you to know for the week! What happened to the priesthood of all believers?

Respect and recognition of the clergy may easily move to priests using their position to impose their will on people and gain status in society. The German sociologist Max Weber called this process 'charismatic domination' – 'if you follow me your life will be blessed'. This proposition is commonly found amongst Evangelical and Pentecostal

Churches in our time.

Upholding the priests is a position especially favoured by people who feel the need of a strong person to hold on to in the midst of life's difficulties. The result can be an unhealthy co-dependence in which the weak person never learns 'to stand on his/her own two feet' and becomes active in defending their champion tenaciously and viciously against any perceived opposition. I know; I have suffered at their hands.

ELIMINATING GOD

Doing away with the supernatural is the hallmark of positivism. We have dealt with positivism above so there is no need to go into it further here. Suffice to say, the foundational presupposition behind all evolutionary thought is that God does not exist. And, if there is no God, there is no condemnation. Strangely, many atheists are ethicists, arguing for principles of justice, mercy, good behaviour and human rights. Where do such concepts come from if God does not exist? This is symptomatic of the positivist world, it is filled with contradictions.

GRACE – GOD'S WAY

In contrast to the temporary measures described above, the Christian finds deliverance from condemnation through *experiencing* God's grace. I say experiencing because no amount of preaching or teaching on grace will cause a human to *know* God's grace. Grace needs to be internalized and that only comes about via a dramatic encounter with the *Logos* within. Each person needs to be led of the Holy Spirit through a process before grace can be comprehended. In my own case, it took quite a few years for the Lord to bring me to that place. I will refrain from giving my testimony here because it may lead you to look into it to try to construct a principle! A principle has no value – that is why Jesus instructed his disciples to tell nobody that He was the Christ (Matt.16:20) and the New Covenant (Heb.8:10-12) expressly instructs us that nobody shall teach his neighbour

to 'know' the Lord. It is experience that carries you through to liberty and on-going experience that keeps you free. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God' (Rom.8:14). Ask the Lord to lead you to grace and start walking with Him. You will not be disappointed.

CHAPTER 4

KNOWLEDGE & LEARNING

“Now that you know God, or rather are known by God...” (Paul, Gal.4:9)

Now that we have some understanding of how people think we are ready to investigate how they may construct knowledge.

LEARNING IN PRIMAL GROUPS

In the early years, primal notions of learning have to do with the corporeal world. There is a measure of mentoring but also a measure of being ‘thrown in the deep end’. African boys learn a lot simply by being in the field with the cattle; at age 10-11 it is commonly found that they can give a detailed and informed account of the plants, animals and rocks in the region in which they have operated. Beyond that, there is the initiation process and entering into the norms of the clan. This is all one needs to know. One has a direct link to the Creator god through the ancestors and access to the combined resources of the relatives. Beyond that there are the sorcerers that have power to discern where and by whom malevolence is being practised against the tribe. It is a closed system with power to sustain itself.

Witchcraft is prevalent throughout the primal world and exists in the West to a greater degree than is sometimes imagined. Witch-*doctoring* begins with *herbalism*. In primal societies all plants are thought to have a use and, while many of the uses may be frivolous (you will find many aphrodisiacs), each clan will have at least one person who knows which herbs are useful for curing common maladies. In Africa, for instance, it is known that the stem of the common guava contains a substance that is effective against gastro-enteritis – a fact confirmed by pharmaceutical research in the USA. But there are problems with herbal remedies. I knew

a man in Malawi who evidenced a strange malady. Every three months or so he would arise in the morning, go into town and start smashing car windows. As a result of this action he would be put in a mental hospital for several weeks, after which he would appear to be perfectly normal and would be released to return to his home. The whole procedure would be repeated every three months or so and had been going on for several years when I first heard about it. A friend of mine and I prayed about it and the scripture Romans 14:2 was brought to our attention by the Holy Spirit: ‘...another, who is weak, eats herbs’. On investigation we found that the man regularly took a certain herb for headaches and when that herb was analysed it was found to have in it an alkaloid that accumulated in the brain tissue. When the alkaloid reached a certain concentration, the man’s behaviour changed drastically. In the mental hospital he was not permitted to eat the herb so over a few weeks his body cleared out the offending substance and he returned to normality. Herbalism, in opposition to manufactured pharmaceuticals, has become popular in the West. We now take “Nature’s Remedies” for our health but we should remember that herbs, like pharmaceuticals, are not always without side effects.

The next step in witch-craft is the white witch doctor. Primal people believe that sickness, accidents and death are all caused by a reduction in the collective life-force and see this brought about by some person practicing dark arts against the family - for it is unthinkable that family members, the ancestors or God would do anything other than act benevolently towards the clan. The white witch-doctor is able to discern who is causing a particular problem. He casts the bones, mutters an incantation and, *hey presto*, the identity of the enemy is found. Cynical Westerners will discount the ability of the primal sorcerers but African friends of mine report being asked to look into a mirror and see in it twenty people from whom they are asked to pick the bad person who caused a death in the tribe. The supernatural is very much with us, perhaps a little less than the Animists would claim but certainly more than the average Westerner will insist.

Then there is the black witch doctor, the African *sangoma*, who both discerns the source of a curse *and* dispenses retaliatory curses to counteract malevolence coming against his client. Such people are held in respectful fear for their powers are legendary. I knew a high ranking public servant in Africa who died as the result of a curse paid for by a person who wanted his job. Primal people are aware of these happenings and a trip to the hospital when one feels unwell is not so much to get treatment as to find out whether or not it is due to a curse. We used to pray for our African workers when they felt unwell. 'I need to go to the hospital', they would say, and we would respond with, 'Let us pray for you'. After prayer they would ask, 'Now can I go to the hospital'! This was not because of unbelief in the efficacy of prayer but a necessary animist maneuver to discount a malevolent act that might be being perpetrated against them.

In Africa, the final grade of malevolence is full blown witches. These are normally women. They maintain their number by drawing girls to themselves from the general populace who appear to 'have the gift'. They have the power to change into animals, fly and have sex with men while they sleep. They are malevolent in the extreme. A friend of mine in Malawi had an aunt who was a witch, the sister of his mother. Having no children of her own she was jealous and killed her sister's sons with witchcraft before they were two years of age. My friend was the last son and he came near to being a victim of the witch's charms when, as a small boy, he was cast to the ground senseless. He was carried to the black witch-doctor's hut where he was pronounced to be under witch-craft. The *sangoma* went further and indicated the aunt as the person responsible. She was told to release the boy or suffer death. Reluctantly she broke the curse and my friend revived. Years later, that witch fell out of the sky while traveling at night. She broke her back and was carried to her hut. Apart from that, nobody attended to her. As they watched through a window, she crawled like a leopard up the wall, hissing and spitting, before falling back dead. Witches are hated in Africa and many of them are still being burned alive, even in more sophisticated places like South

Africa. Such are the happenings in the common life of people in Africa and primal people everywhere. The West scoffs but, up the road, the English *wicken* dance the wheel of the year and light their fires on the summer solstice. And Chekov's *Christmas Night* faithfully reports what really happens on the 25th of September, when the birth of Ninus, son of the Babylonian Queen of Heaven is celebrated by the adherents of paganism.

Western Schooling in Primal Areas

Primal peoples have a great regard for Western education; they see it as the doorway to a better life. Some of them make very good students. I know a number of African people who have doctoral degrees from prestigious European Universities. As a general rule, though, educators have a problem with non-European students – they study by rote. And this means that they do well up to first degree level but struggle beyond that, not because they are not intelligent but because they fail to understand what they are required to do. In dealing with post-graduate students in developing nations, lecturers commonly find it necessary to spend considerable time talking about plagiarism. When the students are asked whether they understand the problem they are quick to assure you that they do. But when they hand in their first essay you are sure to get several contributions which consist entirely of verbatim quotes from the text book without the required referencing. When the essay is handed back with a zero mark, the students have no idea why they failed. Did they not quote the text? How can that be wrong? It is a common problem. There is a lot more I could say about the problems of introducing Western style education to primal peoples but this is not the time and place. Suffice to say, it is a case of Westerners taking it for granted that primal peoples ‘think like us’; nothing could be further from the truth.

SCIENTISM

As we enter the 21st Century, we find that state education in Western

countries is dominated by secular humanist thinking. God has been removed from the equation; positivist scientism is elevated as the prime methodology by which a human may 'know'. This is somewhat surprising because some of the greatest scientific heroes of the West were Christians: Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Halle and Christopher Wren to name a few. Regrettably, the resurrection of positivist reductive propositions in the middle 19th Century has camouflaged this fact and Western society sees itself 'pressing on to perfection' by natural means (Darwin, 1973), choosing to be willfully ignorant of the fact that it is practising a delusion (II Peter 3:3-7). For, in relation to the important questions in education, reductive humanism has nothing positive to say:

- With regard to who and what I am, scientism prescribes: simply chemical elements and nerve impulses;
- With regard to my capability, scientism prescribes: I am permanently limited by my genes.
- With regard to the question 'am I worthwhile', scientism tells me: this can only be determined by psychological testing; once my IQ is determined it will be known how I may contribute to the welfare of human society, if at all.

With regard to rationality, reductive views of humanness provide nothing by way of explanation as to how rationality occurs. In fact, the Radical Materialist, Pan-Psychist and Epiphenomenalist views of the human (see above) deny any possibility of rationality, prescribing a human agency constituted entirely from behavioural responses to environmental hostilities learned from serendipitous experiences. The Psycho-Neural Identity notion allows a degree of rationality but provides no account of how it proceeds - it remains empiricist in that it denies that the *psyche* can be informed by other than material resources.

None of the four reductive accounts provide anything by which the notion

of an idea or a theory may be constituted, and this being so, none of them can be argued to be a ground for learning. For while the management of a hostile environment may focus an important reason why humans should learn, education and learning as they are commonly conceived has to do with ideas, not brute empiricism.

The reality is that the main objective of positivist scientism is to ‘excuse us from being God’s servants’. Its adherents will go to any length and propose any impossible contradiction if by any and every means they may obtain to that objective. It is the greatest possible mystery why so many people in the West look to scientism as a panacea for the solving of all ills, despite the ground swell amongst social scientists that tells us that, ‘virtually every theoretically engaged psychologist today openly rejects positivism in both its 19th and 20th Century forms for it totally fails to give a satisfactory account for the common human experience’ (Tolman, 1991). In fact, scientism not only fails to provide an adequate explanation of reality but precipitates a number of malaises that actually inhibit learning.

Wexler (1990) has described three crises that he found students facing in schools. The reader will have no problem identifying with these dysfunctions because we all have experienced them, not only in school but in our post-schooling years. In a later study (Potter 1994) Wexler’s school crises were shown to be not only the direct result of positivist thinking but reproductions of malaises common in wider Western society. We may call them: (1) a crisis of individualism; (2) an instrumental crisis; and (3) a crisis of identity.

A crisis of individualism

Taylor (1991) sees ‘*the right of the individual to a free will*’ as the moral force behind the push for the emancipation of the common citizen from every form of domination in the modern era (Taylor, 1989). And the culmination of this he sees to be Herder’s idea that ‘there is a way of

being human that is my way. I am called to live my life in this way, and not be an imitator of anyone else... If I am not true to myself, I miss... what being human is for me' (in Taylor, 1991).

But Taylor sees an account of freedom that demands that we break the hold of every external influence and decide everything by and for ourselves alone necessarily producing 'a degraded, absurd and trivial form of authentic life' (Taylor op cit). And it certainly creates plenty of problems in the classroom. Teachers are required to conform to a specified curriculum but how are they supposed to impose this on students in the face of a moral force that tells them they are invading sites of privilege? And will not students find grounds in Herder's proposition to resist an uncertain pedagogy on the ground that it will deny them a unique self-fulfillment? How, in the midst of this kind of world, can the crucial teacher/student relationship be built and maintained? Won't it be a case of the teacher and the students becoming *incomunicado*? And won't the lack of social support cause some students to develop a sense of inadequacy and even a sense of hopelessness? Wexler saw all of this reinforcing a 'feedback loop of failure and withdrawal'. Does this sound familiar? What are the results in terms of learning? Does not the system feed into the work force a few 'high flyers' who happen to find a natural affinity with school tasks, and a majority who emerge from school with varying degrees of low self-esteem and psychological difficulties?

A crisis of instrumentalism

The second malaise defined by Taylor is that which derives from 'the primacy of instrumental reasoning', the idea that we must calculate *the most economic way of gaining a given end*. This proposition arises directly from positivist scientism and it has become massively important in the present age, despite the fact that it is the direct cause of a number of serious social ills. For instance, in industrialized nations the demand for economic growth is commonly used to justify such things as the unequal distribution of wealth and income, inattention to a deteriorating

environment, treating workers as numbers rather than people and building obsolescence into goods. To this list may be added moral dilemmas like euthanasia, the abortion of human fetuses and the notion that food cannot be relocated from places of plenty to starving populations because nobody is prepared to pay the transport costs and duty. Taylor (op cit) sees all of this 'flattening and narrowing our lives'. It is the common experience of people living in instrumentally oriented societies; it is a powerful mechanism that pushes us in directions that offend our humanity and better sense.

That the problem extends to the classroom is easily demonstrated. Education is commonly conceived as human capital (Blaug, 1966, Archer & Moll, 1993). But gaining credentials is also a main thrust in schools and this opens the door for standards and testing. Further, these days industrialized societies are geared to the satisfaction of our wants as consumers. We no longer think of education as a worthwhile activity; the curriculum and teaching in schools has been conformed to fit the requirements of the economy (Manpower Planning). Only a few die-hards hold to *the canon*.

The impact of instrumental thinking on the classroom is especially evident in training institutions. Staff and students are fragmented into subject area groups; nobody identifies with the school as a whole. Participation tends to be ritualistic - we talk to each other 'professionally' but fail to develop a society. Everybody is under pressure to conform. The worst sin is under achievement. Schedules are packed with activity, free-time is non-existent and instrumental planning leaves everyday life empty of meaning. Worse, there is an emphasis on the future, which Wexler (op cit) sees 'evaporating the present'. The aim is 'life at the top' despite the fact that (as we all know) the bulk of students are not going to make it. The end point for many is a sense of failure and inadequacy and not even the few that make the grade necessarily agree that it was worth the struggle. Clearly the underlying instrumental notion has inadequacies and it is not surprising that we find that students from primal groups, who are only in

school thanks to pressure from ‘helpful’ Western governments, slip away to go fishing when they get half a chance.

A crisis of classification

This crisis Taylor sees rising out of ‘political atomism’ and ‘the immense tutelary power of the state’. I will try to explain what he means by the first notion and provide some implications of the second. Taylor starts with the problem that ‘in a city it is hard to function without a car’, and this and other similar requirements places economic demands upon us that in sum produce in us an economic pre-occupation, driven not just by survival needs but by the moral demand that we should strive after a rising standard of living. This is evident when events on the stock exchange are reported – if the price of shares has fallen it is deemed to be a disappointment. Property values rise markedly from time to time even though the bricks and mortar remain the same and nobody recognizes that a rise in price is simply a devaluation of currency. Why is that good? Taylor’s point is that the average citizen can do nothing about it. You have to join the ‘rat race’ or fall by the wayside, even though you know that there are powerful economic forces operating against you which substantially preclude you from moving up the economic ladder. Some people become dispirited and withdraw from societal affairs. At best, they participate only in the company of their economic peers. Few people take up the political option. Everyone votes occasionally but most people do not feel empowered by the process in the face of the vast bureaucratic state apparatus. Respite is sought in wilderness holiday experiences, cinemas and mind-dulling TV programs, but these bring only short respite from the soft despotism to which we all unintentionally contribute.

A crucial element here is our general sense of powerlessness and our inability to change our classification. Wexler finds these experiences shared by students in the modern classroom. Teachers feel helpless in the face of the combined assault on their person from bureaucratic requirements (form filling, etc.) and the normal hostilities of the

classroom. Students, on their part, tend to be overwhelmed by the compulsory nature of the curriculum (doing things in which they have no interest) and their disadvantaged position in the teacher/student power relation. But the problem in schools is deeper than that. Students in schools are classified in various ways, into age groups (a very unnatural society) and by intelligence testing and examinations. Teachers have their own methods of classifying students, they protect themselves by explaining the failure of students to perform well, not on bad teaching but on the student's 'learning difficulties' identified by positivist reductive psychological tests. Such tests are supposed to be diagnostic, aimed at helping teachers devise better ways of teaching, but students see past this kind of language and experience these groupings as moral judgments. Once classified, students feel stigmatized; they suffer the ongoing hostility of having their teachers and fellow students constantly watching them as they go off to their special classes. Once classified, students tell us, you never escape. If the student is not emotionally handicapped prior to testing they are sure to be so afterwards. I knew a case where a mentally bright but physically handicapped student was located in a special school in which she was obliged to study material with subnormal content, dictate her exam answers to an elderly woman helper and undergo regular psychological testing. When an opportunity came for her to attend a private school a group of psychologists had to meet to determine whether she could be released. Fortunately, she was permitted to transfer, for in her first eight weeks at the new school she learned to touch-type 25 words per minute with 98% accuracy and was able to study the whole curriculum. What appalled me was that on the whim of a group of psychologists this girl may have remained institutionalized for the rest of her life, thanks to the well-meaning but intensely de-humanizing efforts of the 'immense tutelary power'.

The three crises defined above explain why life in the West is sometimes experienced as a struggle. We get used to these malaises but they never go away. Some people rise to the top, but they are few in number. Most of us opt out, surviving, as Freud said we would, by working hard, doing good

deeds, spoiling ourselves or drinking alcohol. Few of us stop to question our individualistic, instrumental, classified world or think about how we might change it. It is too big, the job is impossibly hard. We have learned to attribute our failures to our genes and there is nothing we can do about that. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die!

THE REDEEMED SOUL AND POSSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING

Primal traditional life and positivist scientism breed their own limitations. By contrast, Judeo-Christian understandings are hopeful in that they prescribe a possibility of knowing which is beyond human capability. It does not depend on our genes but on our relationship with God. It is available for every person without exception.

How do people learn? Some people say that learning is developmental, that people learn regardless of what formal education they receive. Jean Piaget was of this school. He watched children at play and saw that there was some inner drive within them that ensured that they did not remain passive in their environment. We can agree with that; unless the newborn child is brain dead it will automatically examine the world around it with serious intent, both to locate itself and to come to an understanding of its environment. Other educational psychologists, like Lev Vygotsky, have argued that the crucial element is the teacher, whose job is to ensure that the student experiences the world in a constructive way. But students can have the best teacher in the world and still not learn and this led Jerome Bruner to argue that students will not learn unless they are motivated to construct knowledge within themselves. Putting all of this together, we note that humans are born with a learning aptitude, are helped by good teaching but will only learn if they apply themselves to the task. So, it is not one theory or another. A macro theory of educational psychology is constituted by taking Piaget, Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner together.

In his account of agency, St Augustine drew on memory, intelligence and will. Memory for him encompassed innate standards drawn from God.

Intelligence he saw to be that faculty that believes God; for, like Abraham, he took thinking God's thoughts to be righteousness (Gal.3:6). Dependence on God, in Augustine's view, was the right attitude and right way to live. In what follows we will draw on this account in considering how a human may know and learn.

Sensation, Perception and Judgment

Augustine found no reason to suspect that the senses were deceiving him. On the contrary, he believed that they faithfully reported within the limitations of their abilities. A pencil appears bent when standing in a glass of water. This to Augustine was good sensation. If there was an error of judgment it should be attributed to the intellect, not the senses, in that the intellect is required to inform itself as to the limitations of the senses and take this into account when making judgments.

With regard to perception, Augustine noted that the *animus*, that part of us that thinks about what we are sensing, looks out for things like unity, proportion and number but remains uninformed unless it draws on the intellect where objective parameters are judged against eternal standards like equality, symmetry and beauty. These qualities he judged to be part of Truth, that Truth by which the intellect is illuminated from within. Ultimately, Augustine saw objects only taking on meaning insofar as they reflected something of the unity and perfection of God. In this light, things become something that can be heard. Music was Augustine's favorite example:

“The impact of the notes on the ear does not make the *Deus Creator Omnium*, much less give understanding of its meaning. One impact succeeds another but it is the soul which makes it understandable, giving of its substance to the works formation” (Augustine, *De Alusia*, VI, v.9).

That is, music is meaningless until you put something of yourself into it.

With regard to the notion that humans may have the *Logos* within, Augustine disagreed with the idea that the ‘Pure Idea which is God’ could be injected into the human *psyche* ready-made. Rather he saw it necessary that the divine light should be tempered to our frail nature. He would not allow the notion that any individual or group may have ‘all the Truth’. Rather, he saw a distinction between the Truth in the *Logos* and the light which is in the intellect, i.e. like Paul the apostle, he believed that for the present we prophesy in part and see things as in a mirror, not face to face (I Cor.13:12). And this agrees with our experience. The human who places himself at the Lord’s disposal will find himself caught up in an ongoing process of learning, straining against the limitations of human language, sifting what is eternal from that which is earth-bound. The constant encouragement is the Truth within, calling us on to know Him more, or as Paul said it, for Him to know us (Gal.4:9).

Augustine rejoiced in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, for in them he found patterns and principles by which the *Logos* was pleased to confirm specific revelations from time to time. Such aids were important to Augustine because he saw that the gap in knowledge between our initial fallen state and that which is possible in a renewed mind to be considerable. That is, he saw plenty for the Lord to build into our current learning agenda. However, he also believed that in time our understanding would be perfected to the level for which we were created.

Four Powers

Augustine’s prescribed four powers by which we can know:

- The senses by which we know about external corporeal objects.
- The intellect which affirms non-sensible realities like moral principles and mathematics.
- Other people who can give us information about places we have never seen.
- God, whose authority initiates faith to believe spiritual concepts.

From this we see that Augustine saw all knowledge as derivative, that *no creature may be enlightened by itself*. What a far cry from secular humanism that encourages us to eliminate God and proclaims ourselves the only authority!

Augustine was intrigued with *the power of an idea* over the mind and a person's actions. He believed that an idea could not have this power if it were autonomously derived. He suggested that the power must come from an external force, either from God or the devil. Ultimately he saw God presiding over all knowledge, and this being so, he saw that it was the soul's task to avoid becoming deluded through self-conceit but, rather, to listen and be taught.

I knew a Second World War army nurse, who went to Ethiopia as a missionary assistant. After a time she found herself a lone worker amongst a large people group and her isolation forced her out of necessity to undertake medical work outside of her normal competency, e.g. eye operations. She also planted sixteen large churches in her region. I met her when she came home for furlough and was astonished that she would sit on the floor in a home Bible study taking notes as the speaker shared a few thoughts on a passage of scripture. I was the speaker on one occasion and the absurdity of me trying to teach a person like her was not lost on me. I took the lesson on humility to heart and hopefully am better for it. It happened to me again in Northern Malawi. A Marist brother, with 45 years of experience in the field, sat at my feet and plied me with questions about happenings in the outside church. His gratitude for the little information that I gave him was astounding. He treated me like I was a great man and nothing I could say would alter his opinion. I was reminded of Tolstoy's hermits walking on the sea, crying out that they had forgotten the Bishop's prayer (Leo Tolstoy, *Three Hermits*).

A Moral Agency

Although the redeemed soul is delivered from the bondage of the

‘knowledge of good and evil’, there is still the question of exercising a moral agency – one that leads to the best good. The apostle Paul says we do this by being led by the Holy Spirit rather than checking out our actions against a list of laws. Congruent with what we have seen above, Augustine saw a three part process in which, over time:

- Human desires are aligned with God’s purposes.
- The human belief system draws on an enlightened intellect.
- The will is ‘made perfect in love’.

Augustine found no difficulty conforming to inner standards. Rather, for him this greatly simplified life, both in choosing the best strategy for action and ensuring that moral correctness was achieved. This action not only led to inner peace (*shalom*) but introduced exciting possibilities for redeemed people to live in harmony, finding consensus based on what God was saying to them as a group. But such a state is only possible when false images and distorted perceptions of the self, accumulated prior to conversion, have been dissipated. For it is only then that the soul can comprehend its true self, love itself and be set free to embrace and take on a full command of God’s will, i.e. ‘to love God and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves’ itself (Luke 10:27). Versveld (1990) called this condition of the soul a happy *eudomenia*, the very opposite of the soul of the unredeemed human described by Freud.

An important implication arising from the possibility of moral perfection is that rote learning about God and moral values cannot promote a moral agency. For organized knowledge and teaching is incapable of providing the will power necessary to fulfill the moral obligation. Rather, it leaves the individual ‘doing what they do not want to do and not doing what they want to do’ (Rom.7:15). It is only through a living relationship with our Maker that we can escape condemnation, love God and love the image of God in ourselves. Outside of this, we will continue to walk in a never ending restless search for understanding and enjoyment of life, false images within our mind producing self-hate and self- condemnation. What

we are trying to say here is that much teaching in churches is counter-productive. The apostle Paul did not come with 'excellent speech and wisdom but in demonstration of the power of God' (I Cor.2:1). Apollos preached good sermons but needed Aquila and Priscilla to explain to him the way of God 'more perfectly' (Acts 18:26).

Augustine did not agree with Socrates that responses in the will are dependent on knowledge, for he found the will to be a 'thing most variable' (Taylor, 1989, p.138). The problem is that the unenlightened mind believes that a personal agency is denied by doing the will of God. People fear that by being obedient to God they may lose their identity, become robots. Weakness of will for Augustine was not an intellectual problem but a moral crisis that required that the will be healed by the experience of grace. The human that experiences grace is set free to obey God, not out of compulsion, but out of joy as a loving son (John 5:19).

An inner thought life enclosed upon itself remains ambivalent towards its vices, precipitating a state of adversity. The drive to make ourselves the centre of the world, to relate everything to ourselves, to dominate and possess things around us, has a strong tendency to induce in us a condition in which we are dominated by our own obsessions and fascinated with the external world, rather than the inner communication. In fact, independence shrinks the heart and poisons the wellspring of joy within us. The discovery of God in the intimacy of ourselves, at the root of those powers which are most our own, dissipates perversity of will and makes the inner surrender to the will of God possible. The person who finds this estate will love God without measure, the will 'leaping to go beyond the *cosmos* ordered' (Taylor, 1989, p.139). Of course, all of this is dependent on the new-birth experience and the tearing of the veil in the inner man. Without that the above discussion is meaningless.

Implications for Education

Augustine's insistence that all knowledge is derivative is a good starting

point for a genuine Christian education. Supporting this claim is the reality that humans deprived of sensation can know nothing of the world around them and those deprived of social contact have not only limited access to standards of judgment but may even suffer physical damage. Eccles tells of a girl penned in a room by a psychotic father and not spoken to between the age of 20 months and 13 years 8 months. When rescued the girl's cerebral hemispheres were found to be severely underdeveloped due to language deprivation. Thankfully, she made a full recovery to a normal self-consciousness, emotional state and manual dexterity within a few months of her rescue, thanks to considerable social support (Eccles, 1981). The combination of social support and the revelation of the *Logos* within brings the awareness that 'we are not alone'. This has enormous power to heal.

Central to Augustine's account of learning is the necessity of the paradoxical inner surrender to both internal and external support. In a truly Christian educational environment, the internal and external will work together, both teacher and student committed to the process. In God's plan the timing for initiation of the revelation of the inner experience is in the early adolescent years (see Chapter 7). Prior to that the child accepts social support from its parents but, having trained up the child in the way that it should go, at twelve years of age we need to release our children to God's care. This is widely recognized in cultural ceremonies and rituals such as the Jewish *Bar Mitzvah*. Regrettably it is not always recognized that this is a time for young people 'to get to know God' and many young people get messed up badly when they look in the wrong places for answers to their ill-formed innate questions in their teen years. We shall have more to say about this later.

There is a great deal more that could be said about Christian education, a Christian pedagogy in particular, but this seems not to be the place for it. But, before closing this chapter, it will be worthwhile to mention Augustine's views on communication.

Communication

Augustine was much interested in the problem of how information may be communicated from one *psyche* to another, because, despite the new birth and the tearing of the veil, humans remain in a state of ontological separation. Augustine saw the problem as follows:

‘I often inwardly enjoy something, but when I unfold my thoughts in spoken words I find my powers of expression coming short of my knowledge. Intuition floods the mind with a sudden flash of light but the expression of it in speech is a slow, drawn out and far different process. In fact, while speech is being formed, intellectual apprehension may have already hidden itself... Fortunately, because it has stamped certain imprints upon the memory, these endure for the length of time that it takes to pronounce the words..’ (van Schoor, 1986, p.58).

This is a problem *for the communicator*. The hearer has another problem – reinterpreting the words in a manner that has meaning for them. Thus, mutual understanding is not a given fact but something that has to be strived for. It is not what people say that gives their words meaning but flashes of insight within the hearer. For (anticipating Hume) if the subject is sensible, explanation is impossible without experience and (anticipating Kant) if the subject is ideal one person can suggest something to another person’s mind but knowledge is only gained when the hearer constructs knowledge within themselves.

Augustine liked to use the first person account in his writings as this allowed the reader to identify with the inner struggle and to enter into their own participation as ‘a being in the making’. The goal for Augustine of all communication was to gain this commitment. As a teacher he aimed to reproduce in his students the recognition that their agency was potentially versatile, variable and unlimited.

SUMMARY

Primal communities are closed upon themselves. New information is not seen to be necessary or relevant, and the individual that attempts to introduce it runs the risk of being labeled a non-person and excluded from the clan. Such a fate is unacceptable to someone who believes that their only hope of survival in a hostile spiritual world is to ‘hang together with their relatives’.

The secular humanists paint a world of contradictions. Rationality is excluded from the ontological equation but despite this it is included as an essential part of a positivist agency. Intelligence is controlled by inheritance via genes, so a person’s ability to perform is seen to be fixed in space and time. This creates a hierarchy of being in which some people rise to the top and others are relegated by the education system to menial social tasks. Science and mathematics are held up to be the things we need in our education curriculum, even though it is well known that only a few have the natural aptitude to perform well in these fields. Those who cannot perform well in the scientific disciplines are left feeling inadequate. Reductive scientism provides no hope or encouragement for the average citizen that they may contribute to the general welfare. It introduces malaises that dull the individual’s sense of well-being. It has nothing to commend it and it seems to me disgraceful that children are forcibly subjected to it.

The Judeo-Christian view is that humans are created ‘very good’ and as such are beings of considerable potential ability and resource – not without limitations but sufficiently equipped to operate in God’s *cosmos* to His specification, provided that they operate in association with Him. With regard to knowledge and learning, the Judeo-Christian position is comparable to the primal account in claiming that ‘we are not alone’, having a good relation with the corporeal world via the senses and considerable social support from benevolent folk around us. However, it goes beyond the primal account in prescribing the possibility of a personal

relationship with the Creator and this introduces far better possibilities for learning and knowledge than communicating with God through the ancestors. The discovery of the *Logos* within opens the door for a more certain judgment in a renewed *intellectus* and an ongoing participation in matters far beyond normal human experience. In other words, Judeo-Christianity proposes not only a happy *eudomenia* but exciting times of discovery in this life-time and the next. It hardly needs saying which of the three ideologies provides more encouragement to a humanity locked into a hostile, dysfunctional world. The way out of the mess is to find an intimate relationship with the Lord of Glory and allow Him to lead us to a new heaven and a new earth in which dwells RIGHTEOUSNESS, i.e. a place where God's thoughts and ways prevail (Is.55:6-9). The question remains: why anybody would not accept God's offer of a new start in His Eternal Kingdom?

CHAPTER 5

HUMAN AGENCY

'Blessed is the man that hears my word and does it...' Jesus, Matt.7:24.

Over time, there has been much debate in social science circles as to whether human action is a result of rational thought or simply behavior in response to stimuli. We also note that some human action seems to be irrational, people doing things that most of us would regard as unreasonable. The 'great tutelary power' (see above) puts irrational people in institutions; but courage in situations of extreme hostility may be defined as irrational and it is agreed that courage is not a sign of dementia. People are given Victoria crosses for exhibiting it!

The reality is that some human action is planned and some is not. I knew a man whose job it was to list the vegetation of a new National Park in Africa. As he was walking along, he suddenly noticed a full-grown male lion looking at him from about eighty metres distance. 'In my mind', he told me, 'I was saying, keep calm and walk slowly towards the vehicle; unfortunately, I was already running at 30 kph!' Clearly this agency did not derive from the *ratio*, that part of the human psyche which reasons; and it is not even clear that the *mens*, the spring of action, was motivated. In fact, we might have to agree that stimulus/response theory has something to contribute, even if we do not comprehend the process. The secular humanists would explain my friend's behaviour as a *fight and flight* reaction brought about by a release of adrenalin but what causes adrenalin to be released when we see a lion? Brand (1980) reports a case in which a man pursued by a leopard climbed a pole. When the leopard was dispatched it was found that the skin of the man's hands had stuck to the pole and it proved quite difficult to release him. What was operating here? Can the body think? A woman in childbirth experiences very unnatural things completely beyond her control; the cervix dilates and, at

the appropriate moment, the woman experiences a strong desire to bear down. Where does all of that come from?

Running from a lion might be classified as a rational action but skin sticking to a pole and childbirth defy rational explanation. And, if we think again about courage or cowardice, we again find no easy explanation as to why people act the way they do. The best we can say is that some people have a courageous temperament while others are naturally timid or reticent. My wife and I are a case in point. A man fell off his bicycle on to the road just opposite to where we were standing. I stood still, trying to decide whether the man needed my assistance or not. In the meantime my wife had run to the man and was helping him up. My wife is a spontaneous person, I am not. Why is that?

Some educators have classified students as either *cognitively* oriented or *technically* oriented. Individuals in the first group are seen to be better at school tasks and encouraged to go on to 'higher education'. Individuals in the second group are better at practical operations and are encouraged to take up skill training. But is this division of labour reasonable? Many highly successful business people tell us that they were not good at school tasks! The response of people to Euclidian Geometry is a case in point; students are sharply divided into those who adapt easily to Euclidian Geometry and those who do not. The problem is so evident that curriculum developers are often in two minds, whether Euclid should be included in the curriculum or not. I learned something about this problem when home schooling my daughter. When asked to consider whether the angle ABC and the angle DEF were equal in size, Liz inspected the diagram closely for some time and then looked up and said, 'Yes, they are the same'. I said, 'No, you have to prove it, not just look at them'. She said, 'Why must I prove it when it is perfectly clear that they are the same?' I understood from this that my daughter's first response was in the *anima* rather than the *intellectus*, so I agreed that the angles did look equal in size but asked her to consider the possibility that the question could be proved logically if she would just push past her natural objections to

thinking about it. She obliged me and later proved to be quite proficient in higher mathematics. From this I learned that when Euclid is introduced in the classroom, a lot of students sit wondering what it is all about when it is perfectly obvious that the angles are the same! And what is wrong with that? Did not Augustine say that it is normal for the *anima* to operate prior to the *intellectus*?

RATIONAL PURPOSIVE ACTION

I have introduced this chapter by presenting evidence that precludes a dogmatic prescription of how humans act in the hope that the reader will keep an open mind on the subject. But from this point onwards I will pursue the matter of rational purposive action, for it is a common idea that humans should act deliberately, to ensure their survival and promote the best quality of life possible under the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Augustine saw rational purposive action illuminated by a consideration of desires, beliefs and the human will. This concept seems to be a consequence of our humanity for it applies across the board, i.e. it seems to be applicable regardless of whether humans are located in a society holding to primal, secular humanist or Judeo-Christian beliefs. Of course there are different outcomes, for belief systems are culturally derived.

The universal applicability of the rational purposive model is no-where better evidenced than in the 'management model'. Whether we are counselling someone, conducting a scientific experiment or managing a large corporation, the social sciences agree that the way to success lies in following procedures which on close examination prove to be congruent with rational purposive action. The steps outlined by the various disciplines vary somewhat but underneath the camouflage they all prescribe the same procedure, viz: (1) a need is defined (based on a desire); (2) a way to meet the need is selected and a plan formulated (based on beliefs); (3) action is taken in accordance with the plan (by an

act of will); and (4) the results of the action are evaluated.

Defining a Need

The management model seems straight forward enough but, in fact, every step of the model has its problems. With regard to needs-definition it is commonly found that most people are so distracted by the pressures of life that they fail to sit down to deliberately define their needs, regardless of whether they are primal people or sophisticated Westerners. Primal people are mostly animists, i.e. they believe that behind everything spirits are acting. In Africa on a calm day it is not unusual to see one leaf in a clump of grass waving back and forth frantically. This is easily explained by the African - there is a spirit there; in fact, there are spirits everywhere and curses too and one has enough to do keeping a weather eye on these matters without worrying about other things. In the West the main distraction is a lack of time. Life is one long rush and social pressures are significant – an argument with a spouse weighs heavily on a person's mind, and changes in the economy precipitate financial worries because Westerners always live above their means. (This problem is attributable to the Western economic system). Rational problem solving becomes a luxury, rather than normative practice.

By chance of being birthed in the 1930s, I participated in the social science 'revolution' of the 1960s, and count myself fortunate to have been amongst those who pioneered the adaptation of the management model to the social disciplines. My field was agricultural extension, a branch of non-directive education aimed at improving the lot of primary producers. We were pedantic in those days. I remember having long arguments about whether we should talk of 'needs' or 'problems'. I also remember coming to the conclusion that stating a problem or need was one thing and defining it another; and asking questions like: 'could a farmer's view of what was a problem be taken for granted or did we need to conduct a situation analysis to confirm the nature and severity of the problem?' In the end, we recognised that defining problems was nothing more than an

involvement strategy. And, if we had listened to St Augustine and used the term *desire* we could have saved ourselves a lot of trouble. It is human *action* that counts, not precise definitions of terms. But this is not to say that we do not need to define precisely what we are on about. The scientific method is a case in point. The *desire* in scientific research is to provide an explanation of some phenomenon and we aim to do this by taking the following steps:

- Develop an hypothesis as to causes
- Formulate a rigorous means of testing the hypothesis.
- Conduct an experiment
- Assess the results

Batten (1968) reminds us that in his experience as a change agent (since the 1960s, professional people who come alongside individuals or groups to assist them bring about change in their lives have been called ‘change agents’) people are often ‘vaguely dissatisfied’ but not exactly sure why or what (if anything) they wish to do about it. This is the case regardless of whether we are dealing with primal people immersed in tribal traditions or Western people suffering under the malaises described in Chapter 4. And Christians are not exempt from this. So, the first task in development is helping a person or group to focus their desires into specific needs. In the 1960s we learned to do this via a technique called the Problem Census.

The Problem Census works this way. Individuals in a group are asked to write down a few needs/problems they have. Most people find this difficult so after five minutes or so we suggest that they get into groups of three or four to discuss what they have written down and see if they can come up with one or two matters that they collectively believe are *common* problems. We ask each group to appoint a reporter and after fifteen minutes or so we ask the reporters to give us a short list of problems to write on a board. When that is done, we ask the whole group which of the points listed they would consider the *most* important problems. Invariably a new group will struggle with this but we let them

‘sweat it out’ until someone who cannot stand the strain blurts out something. (Such people are sometimes referred to as socio-emotional leaders). The whole group will normally quickly agree with this suggestion (so that they can get out of an uncomfortable situation) or raise another matter on which consensus is found. We are under no illusion that the matter raised is THE problem. Rather, we see the Problem Census as simply an *involvement strategy* by which the change agent may begin to walk into the lives of the group concerned.

The Problem Census is also *motivational*. I was involved with a group of South African Deputy Headmasters in a post-graduate short course called *Managing Change in Education*. One of the students was employed at a school in Soweto, the great African township south-west of Johannesburg. In his course assignment he reported that on the morning after we had discussed the Problem Census his headmaster asked him how the course was going. The student shared the Problem Census notion with him and the head replied: ‘We must introduce this to the staff’. The next Monday the student carried out an actual problem census with the staff, at the conclusion of which the teachers said: ‘We must introduce this to the parents’. A note was sent to parents asking them to attend an important meeting at the school on the next Friday evening. The meeting was well attended and the parents entered into the spirit of the census and went home after the meeting quite elated. So much so that one parent contacted the South African Broadcasting Corporation and told them about ‘the great things happening in our school’! The result was that the SABC sent in a TV team to the school and produced a video for national television entitled ‘*Soweto school takes charge of its own destiny*’! Everyone involved, both teachers and parents, felt invigorated and encouraged by the process, despite the fact that *no action had been taken to change anything!*

Setting an Objective

Having defined a need (desire), the next step in the rational purposive

action model is to set an objective, i.e. decide *where we want to get to*. We have learned through experience that an objective needs to be more than a vague aim; it needs to be specific to the problem, realistic (achievable) and time-bounded. By time-bounded we mean achievable in a given time; if we don't set a time boundary things tend to drift along and nothing gets done.

Objective setting is problematic in that it is bounded by our experience and current beliefs. The assumption is that we know all the possibilities but this is clearly not the case. And belief systems are hard to change! In Africa, women carry heavy tins of water long distances, often twice a day; it is a time-consuming occupation. I had an African friend working with me who had recently rented a house with an iron roof. It was the rainy season so I suggested to him that he collect water from his roof and store it in a 44 gallon drum. His response was one of total disinterest! Why worry about this? Women had been carrying water since the beginning of time. I mentioned the opportunity to him three more times and it was only on the fourth occasion that he suddenly saw it. He danced around the office like a man possessed, clapping his hands and laughing – yes that could be an excellent idea! It is different when you show a village woman a flush toilet – objective setting for her is precise and instantaneous!

Strategies

Having defined an objective, the next step is to work out how to achieve it. For this we need strategies, and these we devise from our belief system and, if we are wise, learning from others. In agricultural extension, we saw this as the time to bring in the 'expert' but this is not always necessary. In 1969 I was visiting a Commune called Borgo a Mozzano in Tuscany, Italy. Over time, the farmers there had spread their operations onto Government land skirting the River Serchio which ran through the area. The change agency, Shell Italiana, recognized that there would be a problem if something was not done to address the situation, so they called a general meeting of landholders. At the meeting my contact Dr Benazzi

outlined ‘the problem’ briefly and then took his seat alongside of me at the back of the hall. For two hours we sat in a cacophony of conversation that for me was unprecedented, at the conclusion of which the farmers had devised an outstanding strategy to stave off government interference in their affairs. This was an established group with a well-developed internal leadership. New groups generally need external input to achieve the same success. However, the aim of all good change agents should be to work towards doing themselves out of a job.

Devising strategies is a sensitive step in personal-counseling because here it is inappropriate to offer external solutions, despite the fact that the person has been unsuccessful in devising strategies to solve their problem previously. The counsellor’s success depends on their skill in probe questioning that helps the client find something in their own remembrance that leads to a rational action plan. However, apart from this, there is nothing new about counselling as a process. Egan (1976) has devised a model that is widely accepted as a guide to professional counseling practice; on close examination it proves to be nothing more than the generic management model cited above.

Taking Action

Individuals or groups need to act on their plan, for without action the whole process is time wasted. It is legitimate in some circumstances to decide not to act but I am not talking about that, I am talking about procrastination. We all know people who have a grand plan for their lives but never get around to implementing it.

Evaluation

Having acted on our plan we need to evaluate the results and decide if further action is required. Some disciplines have complex protocols for evaluation. Science is a case in point; results are presented to a large audience through scientific publications and conferences, and people are

encouraged to repeat the experiment in a wide range of circumstances. This needs to be done in the natural sciences because there we have to work with probabilities. It takes time and a lot of testing to be certain whether it is legitimate to prescribe a new law for the *cosmos* or register a new pharmaceutical on the National Health Scheme.

Evaluation in social group work is less demanding. Batten (op cit) argues that all we need to ask is: 'are we satisfied (with the result of our action)?' Sometimes evaluation raises new questions and the process starts again. Whether we are going out for a day's recreation, building a steam engine, running a teaching class or going to the moon, the steps of the management model are the rational purposive way to a successful agency

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Setting objectives and planning strategies are key steps in the rational purposive action model and, as we have seen, the objective we set and the strategy we choose will relate back to our own or someone else's belief system. Belief systems are drawn from the culture in which we are located. That is why cross-cultural work is so difficult. Just as the man I mentioned above could not see the relevance of saving women time and energy by collecting water from an iron roof, in any society it most often proves difficult to get people's minds away from established norms. People have *attitudes* which determine in their minds what can and cannot be done. Unless we change the attitude we will not succeed in bringing about development. In fact, many change agents see the whole developmental process built around the concept of 'attitude change'.

The attitudes we encounter will vary from place to place, for they are culturally contrived. It has become popular in these days of multiculturalism to argue that there is no such thing as culture but this is just another of those post-modern delusions that plague us at the moment. Culture is very much with us and Colin Harbison sees that every culture has four elements: (1) a response to nature; (2) redemptive acts;

(3) apostate principles; and (4) distortions.

The Response to Nature

Nature is so much with us that it is inevitable that humans must respond to it in one way or another. According to Genesis, in the beginning God created a garden in which he located the first humans – to tend the garden and from there proceed to plant up the rest of the planet. Even after the fall, man's on-going involvement with nature is recognized in that God ordained that man should work by the sweat of his brow to draw from the earth the things that he needed to sustain himself.

These days, the human response to nature shows marked diversity in that, while primal groups continue to earn their food by labouring in the field, sophisticated people living in cities have so dissociated themselves from nature that it is hard to find people who know where milk comes from or appreciate that agricultural development is necessary if they are going to eat. And while some groups, like the Australian aborigines, prefer to take nature as they find it, this is a far cry from modern preservationists who want to protect the environment by removing humans from the world. Over the past forty years, conservation has moved from developing ways of agricultural production that are in harmony with maintaining soil fertility to rejecting development altogether. Presumably preservationists have plans for manufacturing food by non-agrarian methods but as yet they have not stated how this might be achieved. Like most other movements in the post-modernist Western world, preservationist thinking is loaded with contradictions. They want governments and businesses to expend vast sums of money reinstating land to some idealistic state of pristine glory but seem to have lost sight of the fact that production and wealth requires inputs of *land* as well as *intelligence*, *labour* and *capital*. Further, they seem to have forgotten that the conditions they seek to restore only existed *prior to* the Noahic Flood. The conditions we have to deal with since the Flood are not the pristine world that God created. Land in its natural state is seldom fertile enough to produce food; to become

productive it needs inputs of plant nutrients and technology. If we had left the land as we found it, many parts of the world, Australia included, it would have remained uninhabitable. This is what the post-modern environmentalists want of course, but we do not see them offering to be the first to leave the planet!

The conflict between the various ideological approaches to the environment can be seen in places like Africa where most people are totally dependent on the food they can produce from the land. When Colonial Governments were in power, locals were forbidden to grow their staple food on land with a slope above 5% because of the potential for soil erosion. This was fine as long as the population remained small but once it rose, and the land available became insufficient, gardens began to appear on sloping land with increasing frequency. By the time that the colonial powers had left, populations had risen so much that a scramble to plant sloping land was inevitable. When the rains came, as predicted by Western conservationists, the top soil and seed were carried away. But what were the peasant farmers to do? Finding a balance between the demand for food and the need to conserve soil fertility will continue to be challenging with a world population of seven billion and rising.

The most successful agricultural areas in the world are the flat areas adjacent to the major river systems: Mesopotamia, Mizraim (Egypt), the Danube, the Ganges and the great rivers of China. Europe and China have demonstrated that one human can survive on half a hectare of cultivatable land, provided they have the right technology. On the other hand, African countries demonstrate that you can starve regardless of how much land you have if you do not know what you are about. And it is not certain that a society that allows its young people to bury themselves in a world of video-games, to the neglect of a pristine contact with nature, will survive when the bubble of their artificial technological world bursts. If survival becomes an issue I would back the African boys who have spent time in the fields communing with nature against technocrats skilled in managing mobile phones and laptop computers (see Yunus 1999). The Judeo-

Christian view is that humans are supposed to engage with nature in productive ways. We should be thankful that the gardening memory survives in most of us because without it we should not only not survive but miss our ultimate destiny and calling – acting as faithful stewards of the *cosmos*.

Redemptive Acts

All cultures have established ideas about what are ‘praiseworthy and noble acts’; from the right way of doing ordinary things to ‘high ideals’ - the best we can aim for. Interestingly enough, when you scratch down through the crust of most cultures you will find a somewhat consistent pattern of ‘the good’ amongst all people groups. This pattern seems to derive from some kind of tribal memory and we shall have more to say about this later. There are some differences, of course. For instance, rape is not a crime in Africa. In fact, some African fathers encourage men to enter their daughter’s sleeping place when they come of age, to introduce them to sexual practice. But in the same culture, adultery is a crime because it breaks down the social structure. And there are very unique cultures, like the Masai where a boy gains manhood by killing a lion with a spear, thereafter taking only blood and milk for sustenance. The Masai also exhibit an unusual way of dealing with old age – they leave the elderly, still alive, for the hyenas to take - at the request of the aged person! Another interesting norm is that practiced by the Swazis in Southern Africa: in their culture it is impolite to look into another person’s eyes. The first time I encountered this was in a shop in Swaziland. I could not understand why the shop assistant kept looking anywhere but at me! Some primal groups have quite twisted views of the good, like the people in Irian Jaya reported by Richardson (1974) who thought it praiseworthy to pretend to befriend a person so that you could kill and eat them. Mind you, when he dug deeper, Richardson found the Peace Child principle and was able to use it to bring about an extraordinary change in that people group’s thinking. (It is a moot point but I am inclined to disagree with Richardson that ‘God put something in every culture that would be the

key to making the gospel meaningful'. I think, rather, that the gospel has been preached continually since the fall and the truth remains as a tribal memory in the thinking of every nation, despite being overlaid with nonsense).

When it comes to crucial matters like appointing chiefs or village headmen it is interesting that primal people still reference ancient democratic principles. An excellent example of this is found in Nelson Mandela's biography (Mandela, 1994, pp.19-21). Mandela describes a meeting of tribal elders overseen by his step-father the Temba Chief, and reports how this profoundly influenced him. In particular, he learned how democratic consensus can be achieved by leaders who 'stay behind the flock, letting the nimble go ahead, whereupon the others follow not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind'. I have not heard such wisdom from Western leaders, even those who claim to be in the forefront of promoting democratic principles. Rather, in the West, I find leaders who rule by charismatic and bureaucratic domination and individuals who talk about 'democratic rights' when they are really promoting anarchy.

It is a sad commentary on aid workers that they often assume that nothing in the local culture is adequate to bring about development. By way of contrast, I have a friend, Charles Stephens, who is active in assisting African associations implement good management. His starting point is always to ask the group to list the management principles defined in their own culture. The audience is most often shocked into silence because they are used to seeing themselves as ignorant, because they have been told so, and because they do not have the things that Europeans have. As with the Problem Census (above), it can take a while to get a group moving in this kind of strategy but once one person finally blurts out something a deluge of ideas normally follows. Primal peoples very often know how to manage their problems; they just need to rediscover the old ways.

In every culture, some people can be found 'laying down their lives for

their friends'. Whether it is a neighbour rescuing a family from a house fire with no regard for his/her own safety or a volunteer operating a soup kitchen for the needy, they are motivated by the same underlying belief; it is a worthwhile activity to help others. In the same way, some people agree to act as a village headman or as president of a social or sports club with no hope of remuneration. It used to be that politicians in the West served their country as a duty without pay, in the manner of the Athenian Ecclesia and the elders in Essex who sat under the oak tree as the local moot. The brothers of the Catholic education order of Jean Baptists de la Salle maintain the pattern. Working through local leadership they achieve development miracles without being 'seen'. In the late evening they will be found polishing off a bottle of good Irish whisky but at 4 am they will be on their knees, thanking God that He has given them a people to serve!

A final note: We give thanks to all the mothers who not only give themselves willingly to the business of enduring nine months of pregnancy but years of feeding, clothing and generally caring for the young. Without them, human life would be inconceivable. At the shopping mall, I say a silent thank you every time I pass a young woman with a baby in a pram.

Apostate Principles

The Oxford dictionary says that apostasy is the abandonment of religion. But it is more than that; it is the subtle twisting of the truth by people whose objective it is to deliberately lead others into error. I have referred to the Great Apostasy, the religious system developed at Babel (c. 2200 BC) by Cush (the son of Ham), his wife Semiramus and their son Nimrod who was Tammuz (Ninus), the first King of Assyria. Those interested can read more of this in Hislop (1959) or a short version by myself (Potter 1993).

One thing that the unholy trio initiated was the Tower of Babel and we read in Genesis that God responded by 'confounding the languages' of the

nations (Genesis 11:6-9). The priests of the Apostasy attributed the confounding to Cush (rather than God) and named him Bel the Confounder in their pantheon. Bel is represented everywhere as the god with the club, the club being the symbol of his power to confound. To the Romans he is Janus, to Nordic peoples he is Donner, and to the Ngarrindjeri people in South Australia he is the tribal father whose club is the Bluff at Victor Harbor (Victor Wilson, private communication).

In the same way, Genesis (3:20) tells us that Adam called his wife Eve, 'the mother of all the living'. This fact was twisted in the Apostasy when Nimrod was deified. His mother, Semiramis, was given the name 'Mother of all the Earth'. Later, this notion shifted to 'Earth Mother', the supplier of all sustenance, and later 'Mother Earth', a common idea amongst new age people and conservationists in our time. Feminist witches operating in South Australia worship Sophia 'the Great Woman from whom we all come'! Another idea related to Eve is that she was the one who was beguiled by the devil to eat the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the Apostasy, the woman is worshipped as Mellitta the Mediatrix (the mediator), the one who 'brought down knowledge from Heaven'! We could go on tracing these classical apostate notions but I trust that the principle is clear.

Coming to modern times, we have seen how animistic primal peoples attribute misfortune and ill-health to spirits. This belief shows the classical symptoms of an apostasy in that the reality of demonic involvement in human affairs is twisted to exclude all other causes of ill-health, thereby exposing people to sickness and death without remedy. In many parts of Africa, 40% of children die before the age of five and the major causes are preventable diseases like gastro-enteritis and measles. Another example in Africa is the AIDS pandemic and the attributing of this to poverty rather than a virus. Such an idea renders primal people reluctant to accept preventive social strategies like sexual abstinence and contraception. And worse, it opens the door for *sangomas* and even a Minister of Health to prescribe ridiculous cures, as noted above.

But Westerners are not immune from apostate thinking. Evolution is the obvious example. Because animals show similarities of anatomy and physiology it is argued that they show progressive development from the simplest (single cells organisms) to the most complex. (In fact, single cell organisms are not simple, e.g. the human sperm contains within its nucleus half of the information needed to create a human being). Such a process would take considerable time and in my lifetime estimates of the age of the Earth have doubled every fifteen years or so to cater for positivist theorizing, despite a lack of evidence to support it. The proponents of this ideology have been successful in bringing it to a dominant position in Western thinking. The genes have become the focus for explaining human agency and much of the money dedicated to medical research these days is given to the search for connections between particular genes and disorders that cannot be explained by simple correlations with micro-organisms and/or physiological dysfunction. Demons are definitely excluded and, increasingly, so are psychosomatic connections. Schizophrenia is not attributed to drug taking and demonic influence but to a deficiency of lithium or something equally bizarre, even when the patient admits that they regularly listen to voices.

The recent global warming phenomenon is another case in point. Most scientists think that the slight rise in temperature being experienced on planet Earth is due to a normal solar cycle but this does not deflect the promoters of the global warming ideology from mobilizing people, the easily influenced young in particular, to pressurize legislators and even company directors into believing that the problem is human in origin. The result is the formulation of massively expensive programs aimed at reduction of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, despite the fact that carbon dioxide along with water is the basic substrate of glucose production in plants and the ubiquitous source of energy for animal and human respiration. In fact, carbon remission schemes are nothing more than trillion dollar trading businesses which benefit nobody but merchant banks. Happily, merchant banks are in trouble at the time of writing so there may be a higher power operating. We earnestly hope so for without

it the proponents of the global warming apostasy will go on earning Nobel prizes for causing vital productive industries to decline and adding greatly to the cost of living for the general populace.

As with most sections of this book, the above is only an introduction to the subject of apostate thought in modern societies. The aim is to alert the reader to the problem and start them on their own search for reality amongst the confusions that are from time to time deliberately and maliciously laid upon us.

Distortions/Contradictions

It takes no special effort to find distortions in modern societies. I prefer to call them contradictions. Take the problem of abortion and, in particular, the problem of a girl or woman pregnant via violent rape. Should such a person be permitted to abort the baby? And, what about the case where the continuance of the pregnancy will almost certainly mean that the mother will die? In former times, abortion lay outside of what was permitted so it was practiced down back alleys. Women died. Ethicists say that this must not continue, women needing an abortion must have professional help. But this proved 'a slippery slope', opening the door for abortion-on-demand for women who tell us they must have sovereignty over their bodies. In Australia, we now murder 100 000 babies each year and utilize the fetuses in cosmetic manufacture. The clock has turned back to Roman times when the River Tiber was filled with thrown away babies.

The reality is that there is no general principal that may be applied to the abortion problem. On one hand there are consequences for allowing a pregnancy to continue to a natural conclusion. On the other hand there are predictable psychological outcomes for those who take the abortion option; many women experience a lifetime of regret. Thankfully, for the Christian, there is an answer: 'ask the Lord what to do'. I know of a case in which this was done with a positive result. A woman had a daughter who was a delightful child until the age of thirteen when she became

rebellious at home and sexually promiscuous. At age fifteen she left home having not spoken a word to her mother for two years. When she was nineteen she entered into a de facto relationship with a warlock and became pregnant. The warlock left her and soon after that her mother heard a knock on her door. When she opened the door her daughter fell into her arms sobbing. Their relationship was instantly restored! Together, mother and daughter lifted up the problem of the pregnancy in prayer and the Lord spoke clearly: 'I want this child to have a soul'. That left the mother and daughter in a dilemma because, having been classified by the authorities as an extreme schizophrenic, she could be automatically aborted without reference to the courts or her own choice. As it happened, the abortion was delayed to the twelfth week and the daughter thereafter settled down to a thoroughly normal life. I was called in to give counsel with regard to the Lord's requirement that the baby have a soul. The only thing I could think of was that, in the cases of Tabernacle in the Wilderness and Solomon's Temple the Spirit of God came when the structures were fully formed. Perhaps by this account we could argue that, as the fetus is fully humanoid after eight weeks of pregnancy, this is when the soul is added by an act of God. (Later, I discovered that the old churches thought the soul was added at 40 days into gestation). If this is so, then the delay in the abortion would have ensured that the baby had a soul and had been snatched away to God's throne room to await a better world. Whatever the case, having a clear word from heaven, the girl was able to accept that God was in control. She experienced no psychological repercussions from the abortion.

Other contradictions are evident in which there will never be consensus if we are left with only human judgment. When we devise rules by legislation there are always cases that the ordinances disadvantage. The call for equal education is a case in point. What do we mean by equal education? Do we mean 'access to the same curriculum'? Or do we mean 'attend classes to the same level'? Or are teachers obliged to bring everybody to the same level of competence? Clearly, each person has different capabilities and no matter what help individuals get we can

predict that there will always be a range of education outcomes. But is this due to the individual's intelligence or the biased nature of the curriculum? And how do we build the curriculum, anyway? Do we take a human capital view and accept the old canon as the best means of building human capacity, or do we take credentialism as the guide and tailor courses to suit particular jobs? These and many other questions arise in education, and they are the same questions that we have to ask in relation to the development of wealth and the general welfare of our communities.

The egalitarian project has other contradictions. If everybody in a community is given the same amount of money on the first day of each month, by month's end most of the money will be in the hands of one or two people. This certainly is the case in remote communities in outback Australia. Some people are better at accumulating wealth than others, and this is a fact that most of us have to accept, just as it is equally certain that not all of us are going to perform at the Olympic Games. The reality is that we are not *equal* and this highlights the genius of the New Covenant which prescribes that we shall all relate to the Lord directly in order to receive instructions as to how we should proceed in any and every circumstance. The prescription of rules and norms by legislators on the assumption that they can create good conditions for all is fatally flawed once they go beyond ensuring that every person shall have: (1) a right of passage on public land; (2) the right to participate in and contribute to the economy; and (3) the right to contribute to the making and keeping of societal rules. There is no simple equality (Berlin, 1969). The best that we can provide is a complex equality as prescribed by people like Walzer, (see Walzer 1983, also Potter 1997).

Analysis and classification is another human arena that precipitates distortions. This is so even in the physical realm. As soon as we create classes in basic data we lose information. In my youth I was involved in farm surveys. We asked people all sorts of questions about their farming operations but when it came to finance we tended to avoid direct questions. Instead, we asked respondents to tick squares alongside ranges

of income. This kind of information is weaker than raw data because it cannot be re-processed. It is the same with plant and animal breeding; when you select for one character you inevitably discard characters which may be desirable in different circumstances. This is the problem with psychological classification as mentioned above. We devise artificial standards and compare everybody against them.

Once again we have only skimmed the surface of the distortion problem but, hopefully, the reader's eyes may now be opened to it. One education theorist, Dale (1989), tells us that the way to change things for the better is to work in the contradictions. If this be so, identification of distortions is critical to national and individual development. And there are plenty of them around. Some people like to take their clothes off – hearkening back to pre-Fall times. Others want to preserve nature – hearkening back to the Garden of Eden. Some people think there should be justice in our Law Courts when magistrates know that the best they can achieve is a fair deal! We live in a strange and wonderful world of illusions, seldom breaking through to the way things really are!

CHAPTER 6

A KINGDOM AGENCY

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”, Jesus, Matt.4:4

Human beings isolated from the Creator are locked in upon themselves; they have limited knowledge and are required to be their own authority on every matter concerning their survival and well-being. The Christian position is *that this need not be so*. God has made it possible through His Son for us to be reconciled and restored to that position in the economy of the *cosmos* that God originally intended. And reconciliation becomes a practical reality when God takes up residence in the human spirit, breaks through the veil and begins to communicate His plans and purposes to our individual *psyche*.

By this account, the normal Christian life is an ongoing communication with the *Logos*, an experience of sonship, whereby we lay aside our own ideas in order to embrace the desires and purposes of the Creator. It is not a recipe for apostate church practices and hyper-spirituality; it is a daily experience of intensely practical instruction as to how the *cosmos* may best be ordered. In what follows, I want to emphasize the normalcy of the process in contrast to the way it is ordinarily presented (or not presented) in the churches. For I have found that the grace gifts (*charismata*, I Cor.12:4) remain only an ancient memory in the theology of the liturgical churches, are expressly denied by the ‘Back to the Bible’ evangelical movement and reduced to religious practices by the Pentecostals who should know better.

REVELATION

Our ontological prescription of the human (Chapter 2) and our discussion

of powers by which we may learn (Chapter 4) suggests that all *original* thought must by definition come from outside the system. And if this be so, then the remarkable innovations that occur frequently in human affairs must come via a spiritual process. And if this be so, what we receive must be tested, because there are malevolent spirits that have access to our minds as well as the instructions of the *Logos* from within. In fact there are two challenges - deciding where the message comes from and deciding what it means, for we can only interpret the message from past experience and this is extremely limited compared to the knowledge of the One who is communicating. Augustine was circumspect. In his view, no human can have the whole counsel of God. At best we interpret God's instructions imperfectly. But in line with Augustine's theory of communication, this remains the problem of the communicator, not the receiver, and we can trust God to make His instructions plain. The scriptures are an immense help in this regard in that they portray God's principles and ways. Sharing and getting feed-back from the brethren is also a good way to keep on track.

Now, revelation is not confined to people who call themselves Christians. Cyrus the Great is a case in point - Ezra 1:1. God is sovereign and can communicate with humans even when they are not aware of Him. Such was the case in my 30th year when I had my first experience of scientific revelation. I was undertaking research into irrigation practices and needed an apparatus to determine the air space in soil samples. The literature showed that there were a number of devices for measuring air-space, all of them operating on the principle of Boyle's Law (Robert Boyle, 1627-1691). This law states that in a closed system, the product of the pressure and volume of a gas remains constant providing the temperature remained the same. In all cases described in the literature standard soil sample tins were placed in a sealed chamber, the volume reduced by a standard amount and the resultant increase in pressure measured. A problem with this approach is that the relationship between pressure and air space is non-linear, i.e. the sensitivity of the test increases as the air space decreases. In order to get the required accuracy, research workers have

had to devise pressure measuring devices that in some cases filled the back of a truck! Others used glass manometers - not exactly the best equipment for towing around the field! Further, as the pressure produced was dependent on the atmospheric pressure on the day it was necessary to devise calibration curves for a whole range of starting pressures – a very imprecise process. In the midst of my deliberations, while I was sitting at my office desk, a clear message came to my mind: ‘Measure the change in volume required to bring the pressure to a standard pressure’. Where did that come from? Taking this advice, I devised a *pycnometer* that consisted of a straight metal tube with a piston, a soil sample chamber and a pressure gauge. The machine was small, robust, simple to use and extremely accurate. As the relationship between air space and volume was linear, the piston handle could be marked with equal graduations 0-100, the extremes being the percentage of air in a sample tin full of water (no air) and an empty tin (100% air). Each time the machine was used an empty sample tin was placed in the chamber, the piston moved to 100% and the pressure noted. This was the standard pressure for that test period. All the problems in the prior models were avoided by one simple instruction from on high! Later, when I found a full release in the Holy Spirit, I found such communication to be my common experience.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God is nothing other than the government of God over your life and mine. Instead of being tossed about by the uncertainties of this present world, the experience of the Kingdom is to know who you are, why you exist and what you are required to do on a daily basis. This knowledge comes to you from the indwelling Spirit who gives instructions when He sees it to be needful. The Kingdom experience is not robotic; between instructions you and I do normal things like cleaning our teeth – while keeping an open ear to the Lord, of course.

The Bible (I Cor.12:1-11) lists several different categories of Holy Spirit communication, i.e. ‘words’. Below I record a few experiences I had in

the early years of my missionary life in Africa. I do so to demonstrate that these communications are intensely practical, part and parcel of the daily experience of those who give themselves to the business of the Kingdom. In addition, I am pleased to provide evidence that ‘the word of the Lord does not return to him void’. On the contrary, His proclamations produce a result. ‘God said Let there be Light, and there was light!’ (Gen.1:3).

A Word (logos) of Wisdom

When I first arrived in Malawi in 1977, God gave me a ‘link man’, someone who could interpret the local culture to me and interpret my culture to his people. (The testimony of many missionaries suggests that this is an essential provision if you are to work successfully in a cross-cultural environment). My man’s name was Macford Chipuliko. He went on to become the overseer of a large denomination in Malawi but when he came to me he was earning \$26 per month, barely sufficient to feed his wife and himself and pay the rent on a very basic house. Macford’s family lived in a village some two hours travel by bus from the place where he worked. As a dutiful African son, he went home to visit Agogo quite often. (When an African goes home he/she says ‘I am going to see Agogo’ = the matriarch. This is common practice amongst Bantu speaking populations).

Such visits became difficult for Macford because his relatives would always press him to meet their many needs from his meager resources. It became increasingly the case that he returned from these visits with an intense sense of sadness because his family could not understand that his income was barely sufficient to meet his own needs, let alone theirs. On one trip, as he left he turned to his family and said spontaneously: ‘What you need to do is meet for prayer each week’, and with that he caught the bus for home. Three months later he returned to find significant changes. For a start, the first thing one of his sisters said to him was: ‘Macford, do you have any needs?’ What had happened? His mother told the story. On the Wednesday after he had left she announced to the family that there

would be prayer in her house that afternoon. The only people who attended were the children. They sang for a while and then offered a few formal prayers. The second week the same thing happened, except that, after a while, two of Macford's sisters came to the window and, after listening for a while, went in and joined the meeting. At the conclusion of the prayers one sister said to the other: 'I have this idea. Let's go to Lake Malawi and buy fish'. They did so and on returning sold the fish to their neighbours at a profit. This led them to set up a permanent business trading in fish and in three months they were in a position to offer to meet some of Macford's financial needs! Perhaps it all happened by chance. We prefer to believe that Macford's instruction to hold a prayer meeting was a word of wisdom from the Throne Room of Heaven.

Another remarkable case occurred in Malawi in 1989. In the late 1970s my wife and I had founded the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship in Malawi. It went well for about seven years and then went into decline because we were not there to care for it. In 1989, it was decided to resurrect the association but before that could be done we needed to find the original certificate of formation, the association seal and the minute book. Extensive enquiries were made without success. We had almost abandoned the idea of restarting the Fellowship when I had a letter from one of the Malawi Trustees, Byson Mpinganjira. Byson shared how he had woken one morning strongly impressed that he should go to the Assemblies of God Press in Limbe, without delay. When he arrived at the Press he enquired about the missing ETF materials. Nobody had seen them but he was directed to a store room full of boxes that were to be cleared out and burnt that very day. Byson set about searching through the boxes and in *the very last box* he found the sought after materials. It should be clear from the above that words of wisdom are useful in the practical affairs of Kingdom living.

A Word (logos) of Knowledge

I have already shared how we received a word of knowledge about the

man who smashed car windows. Another case comes to mind. In 1979 I was driving my car slowly along an impossible road at the back of Mount Mulanje in Malawi. A man on a bicycle appeared alongside waving frantically for me to stop. When I did so, he pointed under the car at fuel running out of a three centimeter tear in the petrol tank. We were 65 km from the nearest garage on a Sunday afternoon. Did the man know anybody who could help? 'There is a certain engineer in the next village who fixes bicycles', he said. This was not encouraging but we drove to the village anyway where the 'certain engineer' declared himself unable to fix the problem. At that moment my friend Roger called out: 'Soap... John, the Lord is saying soap!' A small amount of dry, cracked soap was found, kneaded into compliancy and fed into the petrol tank tear. The petrol leak stopped immediately! We found out later that all good mechanics know about this cure for petrol tank leaks but at that time we did not.

A Word (logos) of Faith

The apostle says: 'to another is given faith by the same Spirit' (I Cor.12:9). In the late seventies I lived in Zomba, Malawi. The town had a small airport and associated with it was a commercial flying school for budding African pilots. The trainee pilots were well known around the town as a group that was habitually drunk and disorderly. In early 1979 I was in Karonga in the far north of Malawi and, having completed my assignment, I was at the airport awaiting my flight home. On being called I walked out of the terminal on to the tarmac only to find that my pilot was one of the trainee pilots whom I had known in Zomba. Previously, my pilots had been British ex-patriates, long in experience. Now, for the first time, I had one of the local lads. Could he really fly this machine? To make matters worse, as we walked together to the aircraft, he said to me: 'Mr Potter, I have just heard that there is a head wind of 120kph coming. The flight is going to be very bumpy and I am afraid you will miss your connection to Blantyre'. Strangely, out of my mouth, without prior thought, came the words: 'Lord if you can calm the sea, you can calm this wind'. I was the only passenger on the flight and I found myself strangely

peaceful. The pilot was frantically listening to the wireless; I told him nothing about my *word of faith* because I thought it would be good for him to concentrate! I remember the long descent from Kasungu to Lilongwe. There was no wind; the plane was perfectly steady. We arrived 10 minutes early. Thank you Jesus!

Gifts of Healing

The times that our family has received faith for healing via encouragements from the Lord are almost numberless. I will share a few examples. When we first arrived in Malawi, one of my sons ran up a mountain creek and drank some of the water. The result was an extreme case of dysentery that failed to respond to antibiotics. After three months I felt the Lord telling me to lay hands on him and command his body to be healed. I did so. He was bound up for a week but was completely free of dysentery from that time onwards.

Our three year old daughter developed pneumonia. A missionary doctor gave us a script for the pharmacist but the pharmacy was out of the prescribed medicine; it would take three days to get it! We went home and asked the Lord about it. He told us to lay hands on Lizzie and command the congestion to come out of her. We did so and she immediately coughed up a huge amount of phlegm and ran outside to play.

Judy, my wife, developed some strange lumps under her arms. They looked like boils but the doctor called it ‘Jeep disease’. Apparently, in certain climates, hair follicles under the arms become blocked and develop into boil like lumps. It happened a lot in the Second World War apparently, especially to Jeep drivers – hence the name. It was not a life-threatening condition and the symptoms would pass we were told, but it was uncomfortable and the Lord told me to command the lumps to burst and I did so. The result was rather messy so when the lumps developed a second time I commanded them to shrink. They did so within five minutes of praying.

I could go on recounting stories of successes in healing but I should add that not all sickness is 'from the devil'; it may also be a discipline from the Lord. My job in Malawi, apart from the literature ministry we founded, was to train Malawi nationals in land husbandry methods, what we call soil conservation in Australia. I had a telephone call from the Shire Valley, an extremely hot and desolate area, asking whether I would come down and help them run a seminar. Now I had been to the Shire Valley and found it to be a pretty hopeless sort of place. I tried to excuse myself from going by telling the caller that my government vehicle had been commandeered for the President's women to attend a National Women's Day function, but the caller said that he would send a vehicle for me. I said I would look into it but my thought was that there was no way that I was going to waste my time in the Shire Valley. As I hung up the telephone, something like a shroud descended from above me and in an instant I had full blown 'cold' symptoms. Where had they come from? The next day was Sunday. I preached in a village church and came back home quite miserable, my voice reduced to a whisper. The next morning was the day I was supposed to go to the Shire. I asked my wife to ring my clerk to stop the vehicle coming. He rang back to say it had already left, so I sat on the side of the bed and said: 'Lord, you know that if you really want me to go to the Shire I will go'. Immediately, the cold symptoms began to retire! I went to the Shire! We drove down the 1000m Chikwawa escarpment in a vehicle with no brakes. I was untroubled because I knew for certain that the Lord wanted me in the Shire! We had an excellent seminar and on the fourth day headed out on a field outing at Nsanje, a town in the extreme south of the country. As we walked along a walking track, someone remarked that the track was the boundary of Malawi and Moçambique. Now, I had never been to Moçambique. There was a civil war at the time and the borders with Malawi were closed. I let the group go ahead of me and took two steps across the border just to say I had been to Moçambique. Immediately a spirit of prophecy came upon me. In the Spirit I opened a door into Moçambique for the gospel. Years later Byson Mpinganjira was instructed by the Lord to deliver Bibles to Nsanje. Many pastors came through the door that God had opened to collect Bibles and

other materials helpful to their work. *This was what the Lord had wanted me to do but it took an instant cold to get my head in the right direction.* On the day that I prophesied at Nsanje, I later learned that Reinhardt Bonnke had been led to do the same thing at Mutare on the border of Zimbabwe and Moçambique. God knows what he wants done and how to get his servants to do it!

Miracles

My wife suffers from skin cancers. In the early seventies she had one cut out, but the surgeon split a nerve and after the operation every time she touched the spot another spot on her head tingled. When she developed another cancer between her eye brows she determined to have God heal it, and at every Christian meeting after that she was the first to present herself for prayer! But nothing happened! Some two years later, as we were heading to Malawi from South Africa, my mother, who was coming with us to run the literature office, was in bed with influenza. It was a Sunday, and after the morning church service some women came to my mother's bed to pray for her. The influenza stayed the same but an arthritic spur on my mother's wrist that was causing her a great deal of discomfort completely disappeared. The next day, as we entered Malawi, we discovered that Judy's skin cancer had also gone. Praise the Lord! To complete the story I must report that when we left Malawi some two years later, the cancer reappeared and had to be removed by surgery. How do you explain that?

The Rev Musopole was a graduate of the Free Church of Scotland Livingstonia Mission School pioneered by the great Scottish missionary Robert Laws. Musopole undertook Bible translation work and I wanted him to translate our Bible tracts and study courses into the Chi-Tumbuka language. Early in 1979 I arranged to meet him in an old church building located on Lake Malawi at Karonga. When we met he told me that he was willing to do the work but had developed cataracts in both eyes and did not know whether he would have the eyesight to do the work. The mission

doctor who diagnosed the condition was pessimistic that Musopole's sight could be saved. I felt the Lord instruct me to pray that the cataracts would cease developing and did so with Musopole's agreement. For the next six years I received an annual letter from Musopole asking me to keep praying for his eyes. From the time that I had prayed the cataracts had ceased to develop and he had not only completed translating our tracts and courses but the Atumbuka and Ankhonde Bibles as well. Miracles are sovereign works of God. Everybody wants one but they cannot be obtained by twisting God's arm or getting the 'right person' to pray for you. They are delivered as the Holy Spirit decides (I Cor.12:11).

Prophecy

There are a lot of people going around the world claiming to be prophets but on the day of Pentecost Peter declared that, under the New Covenant, prophecy would no longer be the prerogative of special people. On the contrary, it would be the normal experience of ordinary folk: 'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men dream dreams... and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out my Spirit and *they shall prophesy*' (Acts 2:17-18). It is God who decides to whom He gives His words, not us. In the *ecclesia* I listen to everyone – especially the children. If you are listening it is surprising what you will hear. A problem in the churches is that people are gift-man oriented. They think that, as a little person, they could not possibly contribute prophetic utterance. God thinks differently. In assemblies that I have led, everybody has been encouraged to seek a word in season and share it with the brethren.

Of course, not everything that is shared is from Heaven. Sometimes a prophecy comes from a person's natural thinking. On other occasions the prophecy is initiated by the Holy Spirit but suffers in interpretation. For these reasons, the apostle recommends that all prophecy be tested (I Cor.14:29). But it is important that the believers understand that it is the prophecy being tested, *not the person*, for the latter is likely to quench the

person from trying again, and that is not what is needed. We want to hear from Heaven and it is good to hear the Word of the Lord spoken out amongst God's people assembled. More than that, it is pleasing to Jesus who longs to declare the Name of the Father in the midst of His brethren (Ps.22:22, Heb.2:12).

Discerning of Spirits

There is nothing more important in the Body of Christ than the discerning of spirits because, regrettably, most churches prove to be sanctuaries, not only for the Holy Spirit but for disruptive spiritual influences as well. It has been my experience that God appoints elders (older people, Gk. *presbuteros*) to operate as overseers (see Chapter 7) and equips them with the gift of discernment of spirits. In another place I have outlined how I have learned to deal with spirits in a way that eliminates their influence but does not crush the person through whom they are operating (Potter, 1984). But we note that Jesus' approach to discernment was very direct. In the one conversation he first congratulated Peter on his receiving something direct from the Father and later rebuked him for thinking and speaking the devil's thoughts (Matt.16:17, 23).

Some people do not respond well to correction, regardless of how gently it is delivered. Schizophrenics are a case in point. The Lord showed me a long time ago that most schizophrenics are incorrigible; they have an iron will. I had a case in which during the breaking of bread in an assembly meeting, a strange woman was found to be blaspheming quietly under her breath. After the meeting I approached her and her escort. They were an engaged couple and the man told me that his fiancé needed prayer. Could they come to see me? A meeting was arranged for that evening. When they arrived the woman told us that she had been listening to voices since she was a young girl. We sat her in a chair, laid hands on her head and commanded the voices to be silent. The woman was very surprised to find that the prayer had worked and she could no longer hear the voices. But she was not pleased about this and went away somewhat confused. Some

months later I met the man again and he told me that the voices were back and the woman was happy again.

We had a similar case in which a Christian woman was diagnosed with *Lupus* syndrome. She exhibited a marked degree of disability; she could not walk without a stick and spent much of her time in bed. A pastor prayed for her and stirred up something; she became violent and angry – quite the opposite of her normal self. Some of our women took her into a house for several days and during that time she was delivered of a number of evil influences. On the eleventh day she was walking normally but wandering around the house crying out: ‘I am all alone’. Was this a last demon speaking or was the woman regretting that the demons had left? The next day she organized for her sister to collect her and our women waved her goodbye. Two months later they located her in a hospice. All the old symptoms had returned but she was sitting up in bed smiling. In six months she was dead. It takes a sovereign work of God to heal a schizophrenic but not all of them want the healing! I have known of only one case; a woman rang me after many years of failed ministry to say: ‘Brother John, I am healed’. God did it!

Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues

Scripture records that on the day of Pentecost the disciples spoke in ethnic languages that they had not learned (Acts 2:7-12). I have not had that experience and neither has anybody of my acquaintance, but this does not deny the experience and there are plenty of instances in the literature to support it. I do speak in ‘tongues that nobody understands’ quite often because I have found this to be an indispensable aid to encouraging the Holy Spirit to flow into my *psyche* and through me to a person for whom I am praying. More particularly, when I pray for another person ‘in the spirit’ the Holy Spirit within the other person is stirred up and very often answers their need directly from within.

The evangelicals have dismissed spiritual gifts in favour of Bible study. In

some places they have even persecuted tongue speakers. When they question me about tongues I explain to them that my citizenship is in heaven and my ‘tongue’ is my first language. They are not convinced but it does stop futile argument.

On the mission field my wife and I made it a practice to pray and sing in tongues for two hours or more on the way to bush meetings. Invariably, when we arrived at the appointed place, we found that the demonic forces that might have been arrayed against us had been silenced. It does nobody any harm when I pray in tongues and it does me a lot of good so, like Paul of Tarsus, I shall keep on doing it (I Cor. 14:18).

Sometimes a prophecy in the assembly is spoken in a tongue unknown by any person in the assembled company. Such a word will fall to the ground if it is not interpreted. I have heard a lot of interpretations of tongues. Sometimes the interpretation seems to match the spirit of the message, at other times it does not. But it is good to try even if you make a mess of it. Better to have the ox in the stall and a bit of mess to clean up occasionally than a clean stall with no power operating (Proverbs 14:4)!

FAITH

From beginning to end the Bible is clear about one thing: the just shall live by faith (Hab.2:4, Heb.10:38, etc.). But faith (an active verb) is commonly confused with trust (passive). We say: ‘I have faith in God’ when we really mean ‘I trust God’. Trust is important but it is not faith. When God asks us to do something we act in faith because we trust Him. Colin Urquart put it this way: ‘Faith is *doing* what God has asked us to do, trusting Him for the consequences’. This seems to sum it up. Faith is obedience to the Word of God and there is often a scary edge in complying with it.

Abraham is regarded as the father of all those that act in faith because he *believed* what God told him and acted. ‘Leave this place’, God said, ‘and

go to a place that I will show you'. Judy and I had the same experience. God told us that it would please Him if we went to Africa. For some time I waited around waiting for Him to spell out the details; where exactly we should go, who from my family should be involved, what was the timing and who was paying for the trip – Him or me! In the end He brought me under a severe discipline that caused me to resign my job, sell my house and GO to Africa! Once we got moving all the rest fell into place. Faith is action. Believers are called to live by it.

THE WORD OF GOD

This brings us to the touchy subject of the Word of God. The old churches began with the apostles declaring a Kingdom covenant, first declared by Jeremiah (Jer.31:33-34) and later picked up by Jesus (Matt.16:15-20) and the writer to the Hebrews (Heb.8:10-12; 10:16-17):

‘..This is the covenant that I will make... says the Lord: I will write my laws in their inward parts. I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people. They shall not teach each other to know the Lord for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and remember their sins and iniquities no more’.

The covenant is clear. We *were* reconciled, not by our actions, but by God’s action in delivering Jesus, the Anointed One, into the hands of the devil. (The Biblical word translated reconciled is *katalasso*. It is a market term meaning to exchange money for coins of an equal value. Jesus gave Himself to the devil in exchange for the *cosmos* (II Corinthians 5:19). The devil thought he had a good deal but time was to prove otherwise!). It is this action that justifies God remembering our sin no more. Of course! We were back in God’s camp so our sin (separation) was behind us. Beyond that it is clear that God’s plan was to place His Spirit in us and from there set up an intimate relation whereby He was able to direct operations in His *cosmos* with our compliance. It is not difficult to understand the New

Covenant – it just requires a foundational knowledge of how a human is constructed and knowing how we may keep ourselves open to His instructions on a moment by moment basis. This is the Kingdom message, the good news as defined by the apostles. St Augustine came to the same conclusion after Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, gave him Paul's letters to read in the late 4th Century AD. After that church history shows that things became a bit confused but the Lord keeps on reinstating the Truth in His *ecclesia* (see below) from time to time.

Strange doctrines were about early in church history and the church fathers had to dig in to ensure that sound doctrine prevailed. A major project was the development of the New Testament text, although even this did not eliminate on-going challenges. When Constantine took Christianity as the religion of Rome the church developed a central hierarchy to whom all matters of doctrine were referred. This is still the way it happens in the Old Church; the Pope and the Curia remain the authority when it comes to doctrinal matters. But this is not a foolproof way of retaining sound doctrine. Over time, people like Tyndale were burnt at the stake for translating the Bible into English and the Inquisition burnt many to deliver their souls from their evil bodies (see above). All of this led to the 'Back to the Bible Movement'. Luther emphasized faith but persecuted the Anabaptists for preaching adult re-baptism by immersion. Calvin had something to say about pre-destination but this did not satisfy the Campbell brothers who moved to the USA to develop a genuine New Testament pattern church operation. Unfortunately this led to a legalism that proclaimed the Bible to be the Very Word of God. Such blasphemy has been carried forward to our time.

There is nothing in the Bible (*biblios*) that proclaims the scripture (*graphe*) to be the Word of God. On the contrary, the scripture is clear: 'Jesus Christ is the Word of God' (John 1:1-14, Rev.19:13). Jesus Himself affirmed the scripture but He knew where new life lay: 'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you will find eternal life. These scriptures speak of Me, yet you will not come to Me in order to have Life'

(John 5:39-40).

Some Pentecostal theologians have taken the matter on another strange journey. Recognising that the believer may hear a word directly but, being unwilling to abandon their statement of belief in the scripture, they have introduced a *logos/rhema* concept, declaring that the Bible to be the *Logos* and personal revelation a *rhema* word. Unfortunately for their position, the word *logos* occurs 216 times in the Greek New Testament and never once refers even remotely to anything that could be considered scripture. Scripture is always *graphe*. And, if by *rhema* we mean keys (Matt.16:19) or gifts (I Cor.9-11) why not talk about keys or gifts, because when the scripture talks of revelatory gifts it calls them *logos*, not *rhema*?

We do not wish to diminish the value of scripture in any way (II Tim.3:16). In this discourse I have continually used the scripture to support my arguments. But it is a very different thing to exalt the scripture to the exclusion of an intimate relationship with Jesus the Lord of the Church. Mother Kwang, a Chinese evangelist, tells the story of the persecuted church in China following the Second World War. Early in the 1950s the Communist authorities closed all churches, but the church flourished through the encouragement of traveling preachers. This led the authorities to ban people moving beyond the boundaries of their home parish, but the church continued to flourish. ‘It is the Bible’, said the authorities, so all the Bibles were collected and burnt. Then said Mother Kwang: ‘the Word of the Lord appeared and church numbers exploded!’ Even Communist cadres visited the underground churches by night to seek healing for their bodies if not for their souls. The same thing happened in the Kampuchean refugee camps on the Thailand border in 1980. When the aid workers reached there they wrote to say that the Word of the Lord had arrived there ahead of them!

In 1999 I experienced the same thing in Western Kenya. In the middle 1940s this area experienced what became known as the East African Revival. People sitting in their huts would suddenly get up and return

stolen goods. After that they would seek out a church and sit quietly in the back seat until someone noticed them. Bishop Festo Kivengere was a case in point. His conversion was as dramatic as it was sovereign. He went on to become Uganda's favorite Christian leader, a witness to Idi Amin of God's extra-ordinary grace. One evening in 1999 I preached in a market place in Nakuru, Kenya. There was no doubt about it – God was there and had been there a long time before I got there.

CLOSING REMARKS

We now know something about how we humans are constructed, why we were created and how God intends that we should contribute to His program on Planet Earth. But our response to this opportunity is very much governed by our world view.

Primal peoples hearken back to the beginning and hold to a great deal that is good, e.g. a body, soul and spirit prescription, the value of community, and the reality of the spiritual world. Unfortunately all of this has been shrouded over by apostate thought that has deflected them to believe that the Creator is far off and may not be reached by earth dwellers except via the ancestors, and condemnation and spiritual attack may only be avoided by holding fast to tribal traditions. All of this closes them off from innovation. Poverty is universal and tyrannical governments are predictable, despite the ubiquitous understanding and practice at village level of democratic principles.

Community developers bent on helping primal people to a better life are encouraged to focus on affirming the good principles in the culture and reformulating the bad. Perhaps we should begin by bringing the consolation that God is no longer distant but has come close to us in Jesus Christ. Next we might mention that God has sent the Holy Spirit to replace our weak *seriti*. We are no longer alone, or better still, our community is no longer alone. We have available within us the power that created the universe. Why worry about a few miserable demon spirits? By

operating under God's instructions we can live successfully and compassionately as God requires.

Christian missionaries from the West have not always presented the Gospel this way. The Liturgical churches were successful in penetrating the primal cultures but have largely produced a national church of animists wearing Christian coats. The Evangelicals have declared everything primal to be apostate and have thrown the good out with the bad, leaving people without a culture. And the Pentecostals have reinforced the primal focus of the spiritual life but their converts have been exhorted to carry on a tradition that prescribes that a truly spiritual man may not serve two masters – God and mammon. The result is that national church leaders starve, rob the church till or abandon their faith all together. I have seen it many times.

The situation in the West is entirely different. Despite the fact that 70% of people in Western nations still believe in God, influential people have been successful in ensuring that secular humanist notions dominate thinking where it counts – in the media and the education system. They maintain this position by bombarding us daily with 'Jurassic Park symbolism' that reinforces the notion that the world is billions of years old. Evolution, despite its patent inadequacies, is presented as the thinking man's presupposition along with the proposition of the utility of the separation of church and state. The latter is important because it allows the hierarchy to bypass God in their deliberations.

We have seen that positivism has nothing to contribute to education and human agency, only malaises. Billions of dollars are spent in space research, searching for the ends of the universe and researching possible mechanisms to explain the Big Bang theory of origins, when neither project can possibly benefit mankind in this present dispensation. It is difficult to bring the Gospel to the West. We are all maintained by the 'great tutelary power', our resistance numbed by social welfare payments that save us from starvation but keep us in poverty. It is only when things

get really bad, as in the 1930s depression, that churches are filled to overflowing, when ordinary folk find they need something outside of themselves. In times of economic plenty we prefer the beach to church, and cricket matches to Sunday School.

Those of us who have found the Holy Spirit active in our lives find that the Gospel has much to recommend it. We no longer suffer condemnation or a sense of separation from God because the *Logos* within continually brings the consolation: 'I am here'. We no longer wander the earth looking for answers to our unformed questions; rather, we find ourselves being led to construct knowledge beyond human understanding as the Holy Spirit leads us through a program of mind renewing experiences. Beyond that we enter the world of faith, where we, mere lumps of clay empowered by the Spirit within, act out God's instructions and trust Him for the consequences. Hopefully we are making a difference in God's world but that is largely up to him – we are no longer under law or compulsion. Our job is to enter into the joy of being His sons, looking forward to an eternity of participation in His eternal purposes.

PART II

LIVING TOGETHER
IN
HOUSEHOLDS & ECCLESIAS

CHAPTER 7

THE HOUSEHOLD

*“...and Abraham armed three hundred and eighteen trained servants,
born in his own household”, Genesis 14:14.*

The New Covenant written in Jesus Christ’s blood opened the door for individuals to relate directly to the Creator. But there is another dimension to the Christian experience; it is called UNITY or ONENESS. It is what Jesus prayed for just prior to His crucifixion so we should not ignore it (John 17:1-11). Unity requires that we learn how to live together. In what follows I attempt to spell out the nature and purpose of two human social structures – the household and the *ecclesia*. Both are crucial for human development in God’s economy. We begin with the household because it is the foundational unit of human society.

STRUCTURE

From the Biblical account, we note that a household comes into being when a man and a woman move into a permanent relationship: ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall become one flesh’ (Genesis 23:24). The permanence of the relationship is emphasised by the verb ‘to cleave’; the Hebrew word *dabaq* is equivalent in English to ‘an electric weld’, if done well it is stronger than the original metal.

At the practical level it is clear that the structure must have a degree of permanence if it is to perform its function, for into each household God is pleased to set (Heb. *yashab* = to cause to sit down, to enthrone) natural children, the solitary (Ps.68:6), sojourners and the fatherless and widows (Deut.16:11). The health and welfare of the household is directly related

to the degree of unity exhibited by the primary couple; if their union fractures, the whole household suffers violence.

SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

To the primary account of household structure we must add another dimension – the cloak of spiritual protection that God has provided for those who shelter in Him. The details of this we find in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (I Cor.11:3). It is a simple enough idea. Planet Earth is the universal headquarters of a horde of demons, so people who remain ‘un-covered’ are inevitably exposed to sustained spiritual attack. This reality is well understood by primal peoples but largely disregarded in the sophisticated West. Animists may take spirituality to an extreme but they do not delude themselves that the devil does not exist.

Paul’s idea is that the wise man willingly brings himself under the covering of Christ – ‘Christ is the head of every man’ (I Cor.11:3). That is to say, every *mature* man who heads up a household is called to find spiritual shelter through a direct and personal relationship with the Head of the Church, and this permits him to provide covering for his wife and those who shelter in their well-constructed and well run household. (NB Not every male is ready to head up a household. Primal people know that a male person is not ready for service until they are 30 years old. The Israelites had the same idea; see I Chron.23:3).

The wise woman takes spiritual covering from her man. In many cultures women are glad to take their place under the man to whom they have been given by their parents. They understand that this gives them identity and security. More particularly, they recognise that a woman who is covered from spiritual attack is free to operate at a high level of efficiency in those ministries within the household for which she is best equipped to manage. The need for covering is nowhere more obvious than in the case of the pregnant woman. It is hard to understand why women in the West have such trouble with the concept. My wife and I are fond of demonstrating

the principle by standing together – me with my arm over my wife’s shoulder and she with her arm about my waist. By this means we aim to demonstrate that a man covers the wife spiritually but is held up in this ministry by his wife. No aspect of a marriage is a one sided affair. Marriage is a majestic scaffold designed by God to take the weight of extensive household activity. Blessed are those who enter into it and troubled are those who abandon it. Paul concludes his description of covering by reminding us that Jesus is able to provide covering because He is covered by the Father (I Cor.15:28). If it is good enough for Jesus it should be good enough for us!

LEADERS IN TRAINING

Members of the household apart from the primary couple may be considered *household leaders in training*, for the household is a place of schooling as well as a place of comfort and protection. What is not generally understood is that household training is not an arbitrary matter. Rather, God has ordained a deliberate program of human development under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit. The great commission (Matt.28:19-20) is particularly concerned with training, and the ministry of the mature believer is fundamentally concerned with ‘equipping the saints for the work of the ministry’ (Eph.4:12). The crucial emphasis I wish to bring is that *people learn the basics from their parents in the household – not in public structures*. Even what is learned in schools is overshadowed by the indelible lessons learned at the mother’s knee and by way of observing the operation of the foundational couple at close quarters in the home. As in the workplace, ‘on the job’ training proves superior to classroom learning. In the household we train up a child in the way that it should go and it does not depart from it (Prov.22:6). Hence our problem with Christianised animists in the developing world – at church meetings we clothe them with Christian practices but the lessons learned in their households continue to control the agency of the inner man. And this problem is not confined to the developing world. Many Christians in the West exhibit practices that are not from Christ. Sadly, most

individuals incarcerated in mental institutions are familiar with Christian principles and any church leader will tell you that a fair proportion of the congregation is constantly falling short of the mark when it comes to good behaviour. The problem is that a good human agency is learned in the household and is dependent on the quality of the household management team.

Many who come to know Christ have been raised in a dysfunctional home; they carry with them a lot of baggage. This is not a new problem - 70% of the content of the New Testament letters is an exhortation to better behaviour. It is one thing to gain the Holy Spirit and another to be renewed in the mind and practice a moral and constructive agency.

AGE & MATURITY

Life is not designed by God to be a casual serendipitous experience. Rather, God has ordained a carefully designed agenda for human development, and it is important for household leaders that they not only know about it but have a detailed knowledge of how the Master expects His plan to be implemented. Regrettably, the plan is seldom taught and hardly ever implemented in the Christian world. Even in the West we operate out of traditions rather than knowledge. In what follows, I provide a brief account of what I see to be God's stages of planned development for humans.

Age 0-5

Starting with babies and young children, along with Jean Piaget (1964), we note that there is a definite development pattern in early childhood. From birth to eighteen months a child moves through a multitude of interactions with their physical environment. It is always a revelation for me to watch children exploring their agency potential at this level. Sensory messages are pouring into the child's brain and the psyche is spending a lot of time trying to work out the significance of each

communication. Sometimes a face comes into view that the child associates with an enjoyable experience. The child cannot speak but it shows its pleasure in the best way it can. A great time of learning!

At eighteen months the child begins to show an interest in language. This continues through the next three to four years concluding with the exhibition of extraordinary language learning ability at age 5. At this age any child may learn any language – language is a social function, it is not genetic. We are familiar with people of West Indian extraction located in London speaking with a cockney accent.

Age 6-11

At age six a child is declared to be ‘school ready’. Its agency enters a stage that Piaget identifies as ‘concrete operations’. The primary school years are a time to explore a practical agency, not theorising. In Africa, as we have seen, girls take on household tasks like water carrying and cooking while boys laze away their days in the fields minding cattle. But the minds of these young people are not inactive. Rather, while in the fields, boys develop an extra-ordinary knowledge of the plants, rocks and animals amongst which they move on a daily basis. It is a shame that Western schools delay introducing children to things like biological classification until age thirteen because they are better equipped and more motivated to show an interest in such things at age eight to ten. Similarly, it is well established that children should be introduced to money management at age nine-ten, because it is at that age that they show a readiness to learn entrepreneurial skills. It should be an essential element of the training and accumulation of skills from which the child will not depart (Prov.22:6).

Age 12-16

At twelve years of age or thereabouts there is a fundamental shift in the human *psyche*. This is confirmed by every culture under heaven. It is not

just puberty – although sexual development accompanies the shift in psychological orientation. Jesus at age twelve said it this way: ‘Don’t you know that I must be about my Father’s business?’ A child of twelve is drawn by forces within itself to ask fundamental questions about their personal identity and relationship with the world. But, importantly, a teenager does not necessarily know what the questions are. Lev Vygotsky, the Russian educational psychologist said that ‘if anybody knew the questions it would be a miracle’. The encouraging thing about Jesus’ confrontation with the rabbis at age twelve was that *He knew the questions!* However, being committed to setting a good example, He continued to subject Himself to his earthly parents (Luke 2:46-52), only moving into His ministry when He reached 30 years, as Jewish Law required.

As it happens, the innate questions that develop in early adolescence are addressed very particularly in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Every child needs to be led through these scriptures at age twelve to fourteen *by a family member*, for it is crucial to the development of the adolescent mind that the questions be answered. One important question is ‘Who am I?’ Children under twelve years when asked this question will identify themselves as the child of their parents, whereas at age thirteen they will begin to move towards defining themselves as individuals. They are no longer strictly bound by their parent’s attitudes and opinions. Another question is ‘Where did I come from and where am I going?’ Christian dogma is helpful in regard to this important question in that it provides a satisfactory and detailed explanation of origins and lays hope for a certain future. Answers to these basic questions lead to a greater social awareness like ‘What do other people think of me?’ In particular, the adolescent seeks acceptance amongst the society of its peers. And further, because we all carry with us the impact of our ancestors having eaten from ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ (Gen.2:17), guilt deriving from the development of a super-ego focuses for teenagers the necessity of relating to God. If they find Him at this strategic time the answers to all of their other questions fall into place.

The child who has accommodated the history of the patriarchs of human society in Genesis is settled on a firm foundation. The child that does not have this opportunity wanders the earth looking for answers to questions that it cannot define. Such a search will continue throughout a lifetime, because, lacking answers, the human *psyche* remains dissatisfied and goes on searching. Christian parents need to understand that adolescence is fundamentally about developing a pragmatic and personal relationship with God and the wider community; they should seek to accommodate both objectives in their ongoing relationship with the developing dependent. I had the privilege of sharing the Genesis account with my daughter. At the conclusion of the time of study, she stood up spontaneously in our household fellowship meeting to announce that she had been ‘studying the Patriarchs with Dad and now saw everything differently. I know who I am and where I am going’. A year later she was ‘baptised in the Holy Spirit’ on Pentecost Sunday at a church camp meeting. She spent several hours on the floor, lost in God; she got up finally with full assurance that she was accepted by God ‘in the Beloved’.

Age 16-26

Piaget’s research did not carry him past what he termed ‘formal operations’ in the adolescent years, but development does not stop at age sixteen. Rather, it is established that humans are at their most creative between ages sixteen and twenty six. All the great physicists developed their major theories at this age. Newton turned up at Cambridge University to present his laws of Motion at age twenty two, and Albert Einstein developed his theories of relativity and quantum physics at around the same age. As educationalists we must be careful not to fill the late teens and early twenties with loads of unproductive study at a time they should be free to explore the majesty of their latent genius.

In the early twenties humans tend to become serious about the mating game. It is crucial that they put their relationship together in God’s way. God’s plan for forming a foundational household relationship is for a

couple to begin with an exploration of spiritual unity - *a shared walk with God*. There will be some physical and social attraction but this should remain subservient to the spiritual in the first instance. The next step is commitment, the engagement period in which the couple work towards soul unity - friendship and a capacity to make joint decisions. The final step is marriage, after which the relationship is consummated in sexual intimacy. If this plan is followed a good marriage almost invariably results. Most marriage problems are at their root traceable to a failure to observe this process. The frequency of divorce has risen dramatically in the West as licence has been given for couples to explore sexual intimacy prior to marriage, as if this was the most important thing in a marriage. Unfortunately, as many discover, it is extremely difficult to develop a true soul unity from this position. It is often the case that marital problems can only be addressed by restructuring the relationship in the right way.

Scripture argues that newly married couples should be relieved of all unnecessary responsibilities – a man should ‘spend a year with the wife of his youth’. During this time and beyond it, while the couple are in their twenties, it is good for them to maintain a good relationship with their parental homes. This is helpful both for them and their parents. In David’s Kingdom, special dispensation was given by God for the 20-30 year olds to ‘support the priests’ (I Chron.23:27-32). Churches teach that support ministry should be practised in the ‘local church’ rather than in the parental home. This constitutes a shift of allegiance from the priest of the home to the priest of the denominational structure. It seems to me that this is a serious confusion in Christian practice, brought about by an *Amorite* spirit (Joshua 10), a persuasive voice that is in opposition to the principles of Christ (Col.2:8). In practical terms, there is a great deal of benefit in a young couple relating to a mature household while they are setting up their own household establishment, whereas there is little benefit in them spending exorbitant amounts of time doing non-household things at the local assembly. In fact, the latter may become a serious hindrance to establishing and maintaining a right relationship in the early years of marriage.

Age 30-40

In God's economy, something strategic happens at age thirty. Jesus began his public ministry at this age, and this was not because He was a slow developer. On the contrary, knowing the plan and purposes of God, Jesus stuck to His own rules (I Chron.23:3). How do we translate this notion into a new covenant concept and operation? Quite simply, it is at age thirty that a Christian couple are called to priestly service. (NB It has been my experience that this call only comes when *both* partners reach 30 years). Hopefully, by this time they will have constructed their household after the Godly pattern for now they will be called upon to expose themselves to the spiritual battle. (NB It is not God's will that people under thirty years should be exposed to demonic forces, The under thirties may assist the priests of the home from twenty years and upwards but God's anger is kindled when the under twenties are exposed to evil spiritual forces - see I Chronicles 27:23-24). For the next ten years or so their job will be to provide in every way for their growing household. Crucial in this will be the provision of spiritual protection by establishing the right structure (above) and maintaining their unity, but it also means setting up and directing a righteous lifestyle within the household and generating finance to build equity that provides for the household's economic needs. All of this is done by keeping in close touch with the Lord. Keeping an open door to heaven is crucial. *We are not alone!*

Age 40-50

At age 40, a household may experience the call to 'lengthen the cords of the tent'. True religion, according to James, is to care for widows and orphans (James 1:27). Sometimes circumstances require that a widow or orphan be set into an existing household (Ps.68:6). But this should only be done after careful consideration; for, as noted above, the verb 'to set' in the Hebrew is the same word used when God '*set* Solomon upon the Throne of David'. It is not a light thing to set someone into your household. Newcomers are not to be relegated to the role of household

slaves, as is common in the developing world; they are to be given equal status with other members of the household, providing of course, they can abide by the household rules. According to the Psalmist, those who learn to fit in with the household operation are released from the things that have bound them, whereas the rebellious, those who cannot follow the household rules, will find themselves dwelling in ‘a barren and unwatered land’.

The disruption brought about by the addition of another person to a household can be modified by observing some basic rules. The Church of the Redeemer, Houston, Texas has prescribed the following guidelines for people planning to take persons into their household: (1) every member of the household, including children, should give their consent to the proposition; (2) the foundational couple should seek counsel from two or three other households – preferably mature households headed by overseers (see below); and (3) the whole community of Christians within which the household operates should give their general support to the project. The last guideline is important because, when the person being set in runs into difficulties, they will seek counsel outside of the household. Hopefully, they will seek this counsel from another household within the same fellowship of believers and be patiently led back to ‘get it right’. I have explored the practice of setting in the solitary in some detail because it is an important principle that is not often practised. With regard to widows, remember that Paul encourages us to be careful that the lady is a ‘widow indeed’. His suggestion is that younger single women should be encouraged to marry and build their own households, because their influence as a single person in an existing household may be disruptive (I Tim.5:3-16).

Age forty is also the age at which the Lord may ask the household to step outside of the familiar to embrace a missionary calling. That the call should come at this age is not surprising because it would not make sense that God would call those who are inexperienced in the running of a household to take the principles of Christ to another place or nation. In my

own case, the call came when I was forty one and my wife was forty. We made our Pentecostal offering (see below) and took our household including my widowed mother to Central Africa for a season. The results of our ministry were many and varied but it was significant that some nineteen Africans who were accommodated in our household for a year learned basic household operations as we practiced them. Five years after leaving Africa we returned to find several new households formed by our African disciples, each of them operating in exactly the same manner that they had seen us operating during our time with them. This is discipleship after the Jesus manner, crucial practice for those who are called to be God's ministers.

The work of the ministry is crucial to the work of God. For those who have set themselves apart to serve Him, every part of their lives is presented as an offering to the Most High. We are not on planet earth to serve ourselves, other men or even our children – we are here to advance the Kingdom of God. The key focus in the ministry years is education, education of a specific kind. The example of Jesus suggests that we need to live in close proximity with our disciples, not confine our contact with them to times of formal interaction in special meetings on Sundays. The Gospel is best communicated as we walk and talk – not via a one sided presentation in the form of preaching and/or teaching. People can be exposed to a thousand expository sermons without changing their agency. Most schools and formal churches encounter this problem. The cause is not with the people but with the church's operation. The ministries of Christ are designed to be located in the household. That is where we grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord. I affirm the Puritan Doctrine of the Ordinary Life; work, finance and procreation are ordained by God, they are not inventions of the devil.

Age 50+

The years of ministry will continue for as long as the household couple are prepared to offer themselves but at age fifty it is common for believers

to begin to develop a widening of view. The Bible calls this the gift of oversight (Gk. *episkopos* = ‘to look or watch over’). Most English translations of the Bible translate *episkopos* as ‘Bishop’ (I Tim.3:1-7). Why they do this is hard to understand because the word ‘bishop’ is meaningless while the idea of watching over the church in a caring way has a clear and pragmatic connotation. Another confusion arises in that it is common practice for churches to appoint Elders (capital ‘E’) to perform the duty of overseers when the scripture calls for elders (lower case ‘e’), i.e. *older people*, to be recognised as Overseers. The young, being active and ambitious, are sometimes inclined to dismiss the discipline of coming under oversight. If we are not careful, they can run away with their immature and untested ideas and splinter the church in shameful ways.

Paul sees that an overseer should be the husband of one wife and have proved himself in *managing his own household well*. Otherwise, how could he be expected to care for the church (I Tim.3:5)? Peter said he was an overseer (I Peter 5:1). One young man wishing to justify himself said he did not believe that Peter was old, or for that matter, that he was married. I did not argue with him because he was a fine young man and I loved him. But I trust that he eventually read Matthew 8:14-15 (and found that Peter had a mother-in-law) and made the calculation that, if the Epistle of Peter was written in AD 66, it was unlikely that Peter was less than 60 years of age when he stated that he was counted amongst the *presbuteros* (older people).

The ministry of the overseer is supernatural as well as experiential. An overseer is commonly led of the Holy Spirit to be in the right place at the right time to see things that he needs to see. At least this has been my experience. I remember when administering a mission printing press that it was reported to me that paper was being stolen from the stock supply. The printer in charge blamed an African servant but could present no evidence to support his claim. We prayed about it, asking the Lord to give us insight as to what was going on. After lunch the next Saturday, when I was at ease in my cottage, the Holy Spirit said to me, ‘Go to the Press’.

The message was clear so I immediately drove to the Press. When I arrived I heard the noise of the printing press and, on investigating, I found a white missionary printing documents for his own use without reference to the printer or anybody else in management. I suggested that he stop the press and refrain from such activity in future. I did not make the matter public. When I left the Press a few days later this man fell into my arms and wept bitterly.

The scripture is clear: believers should heed what the overseers are saying (Heb.13:7). Unfortunately the translators have done us a disservice by speaking of those who ‘rule over us’, and this has been used by innumerable Christian leaders to justify acting in a ‘lording over spirit’, despite the fact that Jesus commanded that such a practice should have no place in the community of the redeemed (Matt.20:25-28). We need to understand that overseers are called to exercise a magisterial duty – to hear the evidence and find the way forward to a fair deal, to resolve the issue in a win/win way that *preserves unity*, because this is the will of God (Eph.1:9-10). Unfortunately, this kind of maturity is seldom found in the fellowship of believers, yet it is fundamental and crucial to the proper operation of the church.

In considering the operation of the overseers, we have moved beyond the household into the domain of the *ecclesia*. So it is time to close this chapter and move on to the second structure that the Lord has provided for us to live in harmony with Himself. But before doing so, let me remind you again that God takes the business of household ministry seriously. I mention this because, over time, many Christians have felt that commitment to the ‘ordinary life’ is not ‘spiritual’; they have preferred to be a monk in a monastery or an ordained pastor in a denomination structure rather than an able minister in their own household. By so doing they have presented a false picture of God’s intentions and requirements.

CHAPTER 8

THE ECCLESIA

*“...I will build my ecclesia and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”,
Jesus, Matthew 16:18*

In the 16th Chapter of Matthew’s Gospel we find Jesus stating that He intends to build an *ecclesia*. In the next two chapters we will explore what an *ecclesia* is and how it is supposed to operate, for it is an unfortunate fact that a genuine *ecclesia* is seldom found in Christian circles. The old churches tend to be dominated by an ordained elite and the new churches are more often than not simply large households dominated by a core family. This is definitely not what Jesus had in mind when He mentioned ‘His *ecclesia*’, for the ecclesiastical pattern that comes down to us from antiquity is specific in structure and function.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 510 BC the Hellenes located at Athens set up a form of government called ‘participatory democracy’. Six months later, in 509 BC, quite independently, the Romans set up a remarkably similar form of government which they called the *Senatus Populus Que Romanus* (the SPQR, the Senate and People of Rome). How did all of this come about and what was its significance?

Foundations

History tells us that over time two main forms of human government have emerged – participatory democracy and kingship. According to the ancient record, participatory democracy emerged first in the immediate post flood society under the guidance and encouragement of the great patriarch Shem - Noah’s first son, whose name means the Renowned One.

It is not hard to imagine that Noah and his three sons and their wives would in the first instance operate as a household ‘under God’ with whom they had renewed covenant (Gen.8:20-22). For, not only was Noah a man that walked with God (Gen.7:9) but it is clear that Shem also had a special relationship with the Lord because Noah referred to the Lord as ‘Shem’s God’ (Gen.9:26).

It is hard to over emphasise the crucial influence of the man Shem who lived 500 years after the flood. Not only was he the patriarch of the family from whom came the sons of Eber, (the Hebrews) but many have suggested that he is the best candidate for the personage of *Melchi-Zedek* the King of Righteousness and Priest of the Most High God whom Abraham met on Salem’s Hill (Matt.14:18-19). He was probably also the Egyptian Hercules whose strong arguments led to the demise and execution of Nimrod (Hislop, 1959). Whatever the case, Justin quotes Trogus Promelius as reporting that in the early times men walked in the ‘contented moderation of the ancient manners’, a fact confirmed by Biblical statements that reflect God-fearing attitudes in the early post flood society (e.g. Pharoah and Abimelech, see Genesis 14 and 20). Undoubtedly, Shem’s sustained influence would have contributed to this and it is clear that the ubiquitous occurrence of democratic principles in primal societies in our time relates back to these beginnings. For the village council is still the principle by which simple folk manage their corporate affairs and the operation of the village moots in the forests of Essex bore un-mistakable marks of their ecclesiastical origin.

Whatever the case it is certain from Greek and Roman writings at the time of the setting up of the Athenian *Ecclesia* and the Roman SPQR that the architects of both political developments drew heavily on the ancient records of life in Sumeria, which by common consent must be the society built by the patriarch Shem. For S(he)m and S(u)m may be understood to be the same word if we interpret them by the sounds, in the same way that we would deduce that the Indian deity Krishna by his character, exploits and name may be understood to be an apostate version of the man Noah –

Kr(i)sh N(o)a(h). And, if Shem was the architect of participatory democracy, we may argue that participatory democracy is God's preferred form of human government, especially as the statement of Jesus in Matthew 16:18 that He would 'build His *ecclesia*' confirms it.

The principles by which an *ecclesia* operates are so badly neglected in our time that I have taken the trouble to describe the structure and operation of one outstanding *ecclesia* (that at Athens) prior to exploring what all of this means for a community of Christians.

THE ATHENIAN *ECCLESIA*

The original inhabitants of the peninsula to the west of the Aegean Sea are thought to have been Cretans, descendants of Javan, Japheth's son (Genesis 10:2-4). After them came the Mycenae (1600-1250 BC) followed by the Hellenes (Greeks) who in 1250 BC moved down the Peninsula from Eastern Europe (Robinson 1961). Much is known about the early Greeks through archaeological excavations and their literature. They seem to have been a restless people, their young men fond of voyages of plunder to nearby shores (see Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*). They are believed to have learned writing from Phoenician merchants. Their literature was helped greatly by a language so flexible that it could express shades of meaning and emotions in a way that few other languages can. We are grateful that the New Testament scriptures were prepared for us in that language!

An important influence on development amongst the Greeks was the nature of the terrain in which they lived. The Aegean Peninsula is marked by regions of hills interspersed by small isolated plains. The original Greeks settled themselves in scattered villages under local headmen or chiefs, in the primal manner. The inhabitants of each plain gathered together for religious observance, produce exchange, defence and government. As each group took upon itself a distinct corporate political identity, the need for a centre of government arose. A convenient hill-top

was usually selected to serve both as a fortress and a meeting place. The name given to such a place was '*polis*', from which are derived such words as '*political*' and '*metropolis*'. The community that bore allegiance to a particular Polis became a City-State. In what follows we look particularly at developments in one City-State, Athens.

Terrain and Government

The agricultural advantages of flat land fed by permanent rivers are self-evident. Most of the early peoples congregated in such places, e.g. the Plain of Shinar and the flood plain of the Nile Valley. But extensive plains had one noticeable disadvantage - the lack of natural boundaries left them open to attack from enemies and the development of oppressive regimes. Very often the choice for the ordinary man was to submit to tyrants or leave the flat land and suffer freedom in the agriculturally poor highlands. Genesis 14 speaks of Amorites (the name means *hills-dwellers* = literally 'mountain men' or 'hill-billies') but the Amorites were originally plains dwellers who lived at *Hazezon Tamar* near Engedi. They took to the hills only after Chedorlaomer and his confederates had smitten them (Gen.14:7).

The Greeks on arrival in the Aegean Peninsula found 'the best of both worlds' – good agricultural land in small valleys surrounded by hills that provided natural boundaries and protection. The plains being small, the resulting states were manageable. People lived close to the centre of government and took a vital interest in governmental affairs. 'Being dissatisfied with monarchs, each state undertook the adventurous task of ruling themselves' (Robinson, op cit). The possibility of determining one's own destiny is a rare commodity in the human experience. The Greeks were ecstatic about their freedom and enjoyed the challenge of political responsibility. They developed an intense local patriotism. To say that they loved the Polis would be an understatement. 'She was all in all to them; to be banished from her confines was a calamity almost worse than death itself' (Robinson, op cit).

There was a cost in dividing a nation into small self-governing units; fighting between City-States became common. But the Greeks thought this a small price to pay for the advantages of working out one's own destiny. By the end of the 7th Century BC, City-States were well established in the Greek mainland, the Aegean Islands, and along the coast of Asia, Sicily and Italy.

The Rise of Democracy at Athens

In many of the City-States some people, being no better than serfs, did not share in government. It was wealthy landholders that monopolised power. Self-government was in reality government by a ruling class, as opposed to rule by a king; an oligarchy, the rule by the few. At the end of the 7th Century BC most Greek City-States were of this form.

There were several reasons why the Athenians were able to break away from oligarchic rule to establish a more equitable form of government, a democracy - the rule of many - renewing old standards of participation after Shem. In particular, while Athens was originally a poor and agriculturally insignificant state, in the 6th Century BC, thanks to the influence of some foreign immigrants, various industries had been established and this led to the development of an artisan class who were much less prepared to be pushed around by rich landholders than agricultural peasants. Another factor that helped the process was the enhanced Athenian national pride and enthusiasm that followed their key role in the Greek victory over the invading Persian forces under Xerxes. It was the Athenians that provided the leadership that led to the setting up of a confederation of maritime states called the Delian League. The fleet of the League soundly defeated the Persian Navy in 480 BC, cutting off supplies to the Persian army on the Peninsula. All in all, it was a mighty victory against the strongest power on earth and it left the Athenians in a state of euphoria. After the war, most members of the confederation felt that the Delian League was no longer necessary but the Athenians thought otherwise and forcibly subjugated the breakaway states. Thus, Athens

changed from being the leader of a voluntary confederacy to become the mistress of an Empire.

The leader in all of this was Pericles who by sheer force of character acted as the dominant overseer of Athens for thirty years, maintaining an unique authority as leader and guide of the young democracy. Under him, Athens became a powerful and rich state. Taxes from the subjugated territories filled the coffers, trade flourished and artistic and literary genius flourished to a pitch unrivalled in world history. Thus, in culture as well as power, Athens outshone her sister Grecian states, and nowhere more than in government. For in all matters of government the *ecclesia* (the Assembly) had the final say.

The unique thing about the Athenian *ecclesia* was that every male (apart from slaves and foreigners) was not only entitled to participate and vote but expected to be there! Some outlying farmers might be excused from attending because of distance but ‘...loungers were swept out of the market place by a rope drenched in vermillion. A stain of red on a man’s clothes meant a fine, for the Athenians did not hold with shirking public duties’ (Robinson, op cit). Most people in Athens did not need to be coerced to attend the Assembly as the decisions made had an immediate effect upon their daily lives. ‘It is as though the management of a school was controlled by the student’s debating society, not the Head Master or the School Board. We can easily picture with what interest and enthusiasm such meetings and proceedings would be followed by members of the school’ (Robinson, ibid).

Procedures

The Athenian *ecclesia* met at dawn on stated days. The meeting was held in a natural amphitheatre on the side of a hill called the Pnyx. This was not Area Hill (Latin: Mars Hill) where Paul spoke (Acts 17:22). Area Hill is the place where the Areopagus, the supreme Tribunal of Justice sat. On the Pnyx there was a rock platform on which all speakers stood to address

the Assembly. A member of the Council (see below) presided. A herald would call for silence. Prayers would be offered by a priest and a black pig slaughtered 'to appease the gods. (The Athenians were superstitious – an earthquake or even a drop of rain would be taken to indicate that the gods were not pleased and the Assembly would be adjourned).

'Who wishes to speak', the herald would cry. And whoever wished to address the meeting would mount the platform and have his say. Speakers were heard attentively and the audience was not beyond applause, interjections, boos and hisses. Everyone was supposed to be equal but meetings were often influenced by people with strong powers of persuasion. While Pericles was alive things went well. After his death all sorts of flamboyant characters began to dominate the assembly conversations. Such people were not always wise and the Athenians paid dearly at times for trusting smooth tongued agitators. But whatever the consequences of their decisions, the Athenians were content in the knowledge that at least they had no one to blame but themselves. The passion for freedom caused them to hang tightly to their democratic form of government.

Administration

The Athenians were loath to trust the administration of the State to permanent officials. All public offices were filled by *unpaid* volunteers who served for a fixed term of one year. During his lifetime a man might serve the state in many capacities but after a year of service in any particular role a person would retire to private life and another citizen would be given his job. Such was the distaste for permanence that re-election was a rare event.

The State Council consisted of 500 elders (*senior citizens*) elected by lot by the full assembly. They carried out the business of the Assembly when the Assembly was not sitting. Individual councillors *took turns* to act as chairman of Assembly meetings. They held the Treasury keys *for the day*.

Several *Archons* were appointed each year. Their job was to preside over the Law Courts and superintend religious ceremonies. They were selected by lot in a General Assembly; so far did the Athenians go in their preference for the 'amateur' rather than the 'professional man'.

In times of war, generals were appointed by the Assembly and given command of the army or part of the fleet. Unlike other positions, the office of a general was a lifetime appointment. Only men of influence and proven ability rose to this position. In peace time they performed a range of administrative functions within the State.

A variety of other appointments were required to keep the state running smoothly. Most of these related to regulatory functions such as market inspectors, dock superintendents, etc. There were slaves to do the menial tasks so no public appointments were required for such duties.

Since there were no salaried public servants, the need for state funds was limited. Public costs were easily met by revenue from harbour dues, fines, revenues from state silver mines and tribute paid by allies. Any special needs, e.g. furnishing warships or funding the annual play competition, were met by canvassing rich members of the community. Most people did not mind contributing; they took pride in being patrons of good causes.

The Maintenance of Law and Order

No Athenian was allowed to serve as a policeman. The idea of one Athenian policing another was repugnant to their democratic principles. A corps of archers drawn from Scythian tribesmen from the north acted as the police force.

The courts were presided over by the appointed Archons, except in cases of homicide which were heard by the Areopagus. There were no public prosecutors. The initiation of all cases was left to ordinary citizens who first served a summons on the offender in the presence of witnesses. After

a prescribed interval, to allow the offender to offer recompense out of court, the matter would be taken before a magistrate and a preliminary hearing would take place. All evidence would be taken down by a clerk. His report together with copies of relevant laws and other documents would be placed in a box that was sealed and kept in a safe place. After another set interval the trial proper would take place, this time with a jury of citizens numbering 201, 401 and sometimes more. Until the day of the trial, nobody knew who was going to serve on the jury so bribery was out of the question. The documentary evidence previously collated would be taken from the sealed box and read. Both sides would then make a long speech. Inexperienced people were at liberty to employ an experienced speech writer to write their speech if they wished. There were no cross examinations. At the conclusion of the speeches, the jury would vote by ballot – each juror placing a token in one of two jars. Once the verdict was decided, if the law did not state a penalty both sides would propose one and the jury would decide which was the more appropriate. Penalties varied from fines, disfranchisement, exile and death. Imprisonment was not favoured as there were no gaols. Those under penalty of death were locked up, but only for short periods. Death came by drinking hemlock.

Military Service

Wars were frequent and every Greek State had an understanding that its citizens could be called upon in a time of crisis to bear arms. In Athens, at age eighteen a young man was enrolled in a corps known as the *Epheboi* and underwent training for two years. (Compare this with Sparta where boys went into army training at 6 years of age and continued as trainees until they were thirty!). During the second year a conscript was garrisoned in a fort somewhere on the frontier of Attica, the extended territory ruled by Athens. Thereafter, up to age sixty, a man could be called upon at any time to serve in the armed forces. For this reason the Greeks attached considerable importance to keeping fit. When his mobilisation was posted in the market place, the Greek reservist would take down his spear and shield from the rafters, provide himself with a ration of salted fish, onions

and garlic and line up in the ranks of the citizen's army.

In matters of defence, Athens did not rely heavily on military strength, for the city was strongly fortified and there was a double wall eight kilometres in length running all the way from the city to the port. This meant that in times of siege the Athenians could always get supplies in, providing that their navy could control the seaways. In times of attack the Athenians would not attempt to meet the enemy head on but would rush into the city and stay there until the enemy had worked off its anger in the surrounding fields. Though inconvenient, such damage could be repaired fairly quickly by an intact population. The Athenians saw the upkeep of the navy as of prime importance. Their ancient galleys (Triremes) had a mast for a single mainsail but were mainly dependent for locomotion on three rows of oarsmen on each side of the boat. Oarsmen were normally drawn from ordinary citizens, albeit those from the poorer class.

I have spent a lot of time and space talking about the Athenian *Ecclesia* because I find that there is a lot to commend it for those who wish to participate in the *ecclesia* of Jesus. In my experience, most churches conduct their affairs on household or Babylonian lines, not as an *ecclesia*. Process is just as important as structure and there are lessons for us in the way that the Athenians worked in *ecclesiastical* offices for nothing, the way that offenders were judged and the way that opposition and oppression were dealt with.

THE SPQR

A brief word on the Roman *Senatus Populus Que Romanus* will be useful to confirm that the principles established at Athens were not specific to that site. As mentioned above, both the SPQR and Athens drew on primal principles laid down by Shem under instruction from Almighty God.

The *Populus* met only once each year. The main job was to appoint two Consuls to rule over public affairs during the ensuing year. Note that there

were two Consuls, who had to work together and serve for one year only. This latter rule was applied strictly. The reason that Julius Caesar was murdered was because, being immensely popular after his victories against the Celts, he was appointed Consul four years in a row. This was in contradiction of the rules and some Senators saw their democratic principle being badly compromised.

The Senate was *not* a ruling body. It was the counterpart of the Athenian Council, citizens of proven ability were appointed to the Senate by the *Populus*. Their job was to meet frequently to think of ways and means of improving Roman society. In modern terms the Senate was a ‘think tank’ exercising a caring oversight (not rule) over Roman affairs. As with Athens, the Romans appointed Dictators (Army Generals) for life.

There are many other things that could be said but these few similarities between Athenian and Roman ecclesiastical government should suffice to make the point that there is nothing mysterious about the operation of an ecclesia. So now we are ready to think about Christ’s *Ecclesia* – His strategy to retake the *cosmos*.

CHAPTER 9

THE CHRISTIAN ECCLESIA

*“...and when they had gathered the multitude together,
they delivered the letter”, Acts 15:30.*

Jesus statement of the New Covenant as recorded in Matthew 16:13-20 is not a collection of unrelated ideas. It is a coherent statement that begins with the principle of personal revelation and moves on to say that, in His *ecclesia*, Jesus will give us the keys of the Kingdom, so that ‘whatever we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever we loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’. Is that what your Bible says? Have another look, this time in the Greek interlinear Bible. You will find that Jesus said it another way, viz: ‘Whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound *having already been* bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed *having already been* loosed in heaven’. And that makes more sense because, having been called to sonship, we can agree that without strategy from on high we are totally unprepared and uninformed as to how to advance the battle. Friends, at all times and in every circumstance, we need direction and information from on high. God is ready to give us this in the form of keys, i.e. snippets of information that inform us very directly as to how we may best proceed in every circumstance. These are the *pneumatikon* (spiritual things) noted by Paul in I Corinthians 12:8-1.

If we wish to understand why Jesus, the Head of the Church, should reference the Athenian *ecclesia* when describing an assemblage of believers, there is no better place to start than the 2nd Chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. Here we have recorded in a few words both the intent and manner in which Jesus intends that His Post-Cross ministry should be conducted:

‘What is man that You are mindful of him? You have made him a little

lower than *Elohim*, crowned him with glory and honour, set him over the works of Your hands and put all things in subjection under his feet (Heb.2:6-8a, quoting Psalm 8).

It is man's position in the scheme of things to be the conduit through which God channels his instructions to the *cosmos*. Being reconciled by Jesus's action on the cross, the opportunity is there for us to re-connect with the *Logos* so that God may write His instructions on our hearts and minds from within and by that means equip us to oversee the management of the earth in an ordered and productive manner (Potter 2012). This sounds easy but a problem arises in that the rest of Hebrews 2:8 says: 'But now we see that all things are NOT under his (man's) feet' (Heb.2:8b). That is to say, despite the fact that some of us have taken up the offer of reconciliation – *the earth is presently not in our hands*. The devil and his minions are still located in strategic positions and still direct the actions of the vast majority of humanity in an inappropriate manner. Before we can hope to bring order to the 'creature' we must first TAKE BACK THE LAND from the devil!

What Jesus is telling us in Matthew 16 is that taking the land will require more than a host of *individual* Christians working in isolation from one another. Not even a number of strong households doing their own thing will be sufficient for the job. Jesus wants us to come together to build an *ecclesia* **from time to time** because He knows that it is against this structure that the gates of hell will not prevail (Matt.16:18). The task then is to allow the Holy Spirit to construct the 'house' in the prescribed manner. Then and only then we shall find ourselves winning the battle. This is very important.

JESUS, THE FIRST OF MANY BRETHREN

The manner in which Jesus brought us back to the Father is quite extraordinary. Though He was (and is) the eternal *Logos*, He willingly brought Himself down to the level of humanity in order that He might

offer Himself once and for all as a propitiation for man's rebellion and by so doing win back the cosmos and bring MANY SONS TO GLORY! Now, 'He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are ONE and He is not ashamed to call us BROTHERS' (Heb.2:9-11)! Astonishing! When Jesus meets with us he does not treat us as servants – He treats us as friends and shares with us what He is hearing from His Father (John 15:15).

To bring this down to practicalities, when Jesus meets with us in the *ecclesia*, although He is the ONLY Head of the *Ecclesia* (Church), he prefers to operate 'off the platform', saying 'I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, *in the midst* of the *ecclesia* will I sing praise to Thee!' (Heb.2:12, referencing Psalm 22). Friends, we need to understand that Jesus did not come to 'lord it over us'. John 13:13-17 tells us that although He is Lord, He washed His disciple's feet *as an example* for us to follow. We are not greater than Him so we cannot escape the fact that we should serve one another with humility and grace. This was very important to Jesus because He knew that left to ourselves we would follow after the manner of the Gentiles and seek to *dominate one another*. When this happens, the *ecclesia* is not built and the land is not liberated. That the land is ready to be liberated is made clear by Paul who says that the creation is 'standing on tiptoe waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God' (Rom.8:18-25, Phillips translation). In another place, the writer to the Hebrews encourages us to 'look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross' (Heb.12:2). What was the joy that lay beyond the cross? Psalm 22 gives the clue; in the midst of the experience of the cross Jesus cried out that He would declare the Father's Name in the midst of the brethren, that His praise shall be of His Father in the GREAT CONGREGATION (Ps.22:22-25). There is no doubt what Jesus saw to be the joy that lay beyond the cross – **it was to participate in the *ecclesia***, the Assembly of God's people restored to the Father by Jesus's act of reconciliation. If Jesus is so intent on participating in the *ecclesia* how is it that Christians through the ages have so neglected it? Some reasons seem to be:

False traditions: The established church has not followed the ecclesiastical pattern. Rather, it has followed after the Babylonian pattern in which special people (ordained priests) control the meetings. And this is not solely a fault in the Liturgical churches; the same pattern is found in Evangelical and Pentecostal churches around the world.

Domination: Humans delight to rule over one another and the ‘lording over’ (Baal) spirit is commonly found in churches, despite the fact that Jesus expressly commanded us that ‘it should not be so amongst you’ (Matt.20:25-28).

Demon Influence: The devil deflects us from our high purpose by placing persuasive (Amorite) voices in our midst. Such people are easily recognised. They act out of self-righteousness, being driven by human pride and arrogance - common attributes in Christian circles unfortunately.

The way out of all of these problems is to re-construct our assembling around the principles of the Christ. The early church managed it - so can we. The scriptural account of the first *ecclesia* is brief but sufficient to provide all the information we need to order our ways. Acts 6 and 15 provide accounts of ecclesiastical meetings and in his first letter to the Corinthians Paul provides clear instructions for participation in the *ecclesia*.

THE MULTITUDE

The Athenian *ecclesia* was not convened on a set day; the citizens were summoned any time that there were important matters to consider. We find this principle under the Old Covenant; the people assembled when the trumpet sounded. So it is for Jesus’ *ecclesia*, meetings are not confined to practising hyper-spiritual activities on Sundays or the Sabbath. On the contrary, they are meant to be **workday business meetings!**

In Acts 6 we hear that a meeting was convened because the Greek widows felt they were getting a bad deal at the daily distribution. There was murmuring in the camp! When the apostles heard of it, they did not act in an elitist manner, meeting behind closed doors and laying their decision on the disciples. Rather, they *handed the matter over to the full assembly* for resolution, with the wise counsel that the Assembly select a few men of ‘good report and full of the Holy Ghost’ to oversee the business (Acts 6:7). It was the multitude that managed the affair, not a group of ‘leaders’. The Greek word translated ‘multitude’ is *plethos*; the sense of it is ‘the fullness of the community of the brethren’, i.e. when the Christian *ecclesia* met, as in Athens, the whole community was entitled and expected to be there. In Acts 6 it was the multitude that chose the food distributors and the subsequent acts of Stephen (Acts 7) and Phillip (Acts 8) suggest that they did a good job.

In Acts 15 we find a problem of Christian doctrine and practice: ‘is it necessary for Gentile Christians to be circumcised?’ Paul and Barnabas believed not but some ex-Pharisee believers said that it was needful. How was the matter to be resolved? Paul and Barnabas headed off to Jerusalem to sort the matter out. Their arrival initiated a full meeting of the Jerusalem *ecclesia* (v.4). It was there that they and the Pharisees made their statements. Verse 6 suggests that the apostles might have discussed the matter during a tea break but it is clear that they had no special decision making powers, even though they could have been expected to have their own ideas about the matter. Peter made his contribution to the whole assembly (very humbly by the way) and this opened the door for Paul and Barnabas to tell their story. Of course, in the *ecclesiastical* manner there was an elder in the chair – in this case Jesus’ brother James (NB not an apostle); it was his job to summarise the discussion, in the same way as Nelson Mandela’s father-in-law, the Temba Chief, did in the *indaba* described in Mandela’s book (Mandela 1994). We read that James put the view, with scriptural support, that the assembly had been led of the Holy Spirit to not trouble the Gentiles with Mosaic Law and with this we are told *the whole ecclesia agreed*. Finding unity on the matter, the *whole*

ecclesia (v.22) was pleased to send chosen men back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas with a letter from the apostles, elders *and the brethren* that affirmed that ‘it seemed good to us *being assembled* and *in one accord* to bring our report’ about the matter of circumcision. Note also that when the party reached Antioch the message was delivered once again to *the multitude* (v.30).

An unbiased reading of the scriptures makes it abundantly clear that the early church was in the habit of including *all* the saints in discussions on important matters, not just a select group. And it is interesting to note that in Acts 6, after the assembly had taken appropriate action, ‘the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem GREATLY’ (Acts 6:7)! Doing things God’s way brings a good result!

TOWARDS AN *ECCLESIA*

What similarities can we find in this account with the Athenian *ecclesia*? Firstly, it seems that in the early Christian communities all believers were encouraged to attend important meetings and, presumably, every believer had the right to be heard. Secondly, ecclesiastical *administration* and *oversight* seemed to be in the hands of *mature* believers (elders, i.e. old people). James was the chairman in the Acts 15 case but if the Athenian practice was followed it was probable that he was not chairman all the time. Thirdly, the early church did not come together to be influenced by persuasive speakers - the aim always was to seek understanding as to how God saw the issue. This had (and always has had) the important side effect *that unity is maintained*. Note that in Acts 15, due consideration was given to testimony. Peter recounted what God had done amongst the Gentiles; how He had given the Holy Spirit to the household of Cornelius *before* they were baptised and how this was sufficient for Peter to conclude that God had put no difference between the Gentiles and the Jews, ‘purifying their hearts by faith’. So why lay on the Gentiles the Law that had been too hard for the Jews?! The matter was resolved when James added scriptural confirmation to testimony. Everyone went home satisfied that

God's will had been found and acted upon. More particularly, the work went forward (Acts 15:36ff).

Participation

It is one thing for every believer to be present in an assembly meeting and another for each person to bring something valuable to the discussion. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes it clear that the opportunity is there for every person to make a contribution to the meeting (I Cor.14:23-30). The object of the meeting in his view is that everybody should be edified, i.e. go away better informed than when they came – not at a human level but informed as to God's current strategies and purposes. To this end Paul encourages *everyone* to 'have a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation' and, above all, he makes a plea for prophecy. Who may prophesy? Everybody (I Cor.14:25)! How? One by one in good order, as in any other ordered business meeting. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, so we don't have to speak over each other. We await our turn. If God is in control of the meeting, He will make a space for us to share what we have received from Him *at the right time*.

The first job for us as individuals in the assembly is to stir up the gift within us, in order that we may have something to contribute. (NB: We learn to do this in the household – not in the *ecclesia*). The second job is to develop skills in *judging* (assessing) what has been spoken (I Cor.14:29). We are encouraged to deliver our message with humility, recognising that not everything that we 'get' is from the Lord. However, as noted above, while everything needs to be judged to see whether it be of God, we need to remember that we are to judge the message and *not the prophet*. People should feel free to participate with a glad heart. God is not a respecter of persons. The message does not always come from the most experienced people.

Some of us may find it difficult to express in words what the Holy Spirit

is saying to us. If it comes out not quite right that is not a crime. It is better to try than to hold back for fear of making a mistake. Most likely it will be the apostles and teaching elders amongst us who will be the most able to interpret and pull the various messages together, but this is not necessarily the case.

This is the tabernacle (tent – *succoth*, Gk.) of David referred to by James (Acts 15:16). There is no bronze altar – we are no longer separated from God. There is no laver and anointing oil for we have received the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. And there is no veil between us and the mercy seat – that has been torn asunder from top to bottom. *The Ark is present amongst the brethren.*

But how does this operate in a large Assembly? One Assembly of six thousand believers that I know operates as follows. The meeting starts with worship. The band gives the lead. It follows a prayerfully selected schedule of songs but keeps an open ear to the Holy Spirit in case He wishes to lead in another direction. (In a small group it is possible for individual believers to ‘bring a song’ as the Spirit leads but in a larger group this is difficult). After a while *there is a sense* that the song worship has concluded and by this time a number of people have lined up behind a microphone ready to speak out what they believe the Lord wants said. They prophesy, one by one. The leader for the day takes careful note of the various words and attempts to bring them together into a coherent message. Sometimes the message calls for a response. Once when I was there, the message indicated that the Lord was ready to provide healing to the physically afflicted. The leader responded (acted in faith) by asking all those that needed a touch in their bodies to put up their hands. Finding that there were quite a number he invited those near them to pray for them. It was wonderful to see many people getting healed all over the assembly. At other times the message may be a general encouragement or instruction for daily life. This will be duly emphasised by the leader for the day. After the prophetic word has been attended to, the leader may deliver a short teaching or testimony – but this only happens if there is

time. The main reason that people are there is to hear what the Word of the Lord wishes to say. Having heard the Lord's strategy for the week the believers return to their households equipped to continue the battle in the circumstances of their daily lives. This is 'church' the Jesus way.

ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION

Overseers

We have seen in Acts 6 how mature household leaders find themselves gifted by the Holy Spirit to provide oversight over the community of the redeemed. And we have seen how Paul characterises a good overseer, not in terms of credentials gained in Bible School but in characteristics developed *in the household*. It is a job for older men (not a novice, I Tim.3:6), preferably one who has a good reputation in the general community.

Now the job of an overseer is firstly to 'chair' ecclesiastical meetings, in rotation with his fellow elders. This duty is not carried out 'on the platform', for in the tabernacle of the Lord we are all ministers of equal rank. Our rank in the world or in our household does not give us special rights before the Ark of God. King David is our example. When he went up to worship the Lord he removed his badges of office and danced before the Lord in his undergarment (II Sam.6:14). The best overseers care for the assembly from the back row! (Do not forget Mandela's Temba Chief – he never took part in the discussions. His job was to open and close the meeting in the same manner that Giovanni Benazzi did the night that I attended a farmer's *ecclesia* at Borgo a Mozzano, Tuscany, Italy some 43 years ago – see above).

As the carer of the Assembly, the overseer has a responsibility to see that the tabernacle operation reaches a satisfactory conclusion. Gifted teaching elders will of necessity be active in judging prophecy from their experience and from their understanding of the scriptures, pulling together

the various words that come through the saints during the meeting. But they do this ‘on the same level’ as the rest of the community, not by teaching over everybody else. Peter in Acts 15 is a good example. There is nothing in his statement that insists on recognition of his superior right to judge the case. Like Jesus, Peter is content to be *one of the brethren*. I am impressed at the way that he states his case. ‘We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (the Gentiles)’! Most of us would have said: I believe that the Gentiles will be saved just like us!

The Athenian overseers looked after the cash on the days that they had responsibility for the meeting. What does money have to do with the *ecclesia*? There are a few expenses, like the rent for the meeting place, but the overseer for the day could pay this out of his own pocket. In assemblies in which I have been an overseer we do not take up collections during the meetings, but we were forced to prayer when people began stuffing money into my pockets after the meeting. This usually happened while I was talking to someone else so it was impossible to keep a proper account of the purpose of the donations. The Lord led us to II Kings 12:9 which speaks of placing a box ‘by the side of the altar’ for the *free-will* offerings. As the New Covenant expressly calls for free-will offerings we encouraged the saints to drop their offering in a box left at the back of the hall. We make no special mention of it in the meeting because there may be visitors present and we do not expect them to contribute money to our operations. If someone wishes to support a person in need they may place their donation in the box in an envelope suitably marked. The overseer for the day ensures that the funds are delivered to the persons who do the banking and keep the accounts.

Overseers find themselves required to give advice and counsel to individuals and the community as a whole. Newly converted people commonly look for advice in managing the spiritual battle, understanding scriptural principles, interpreting a ‘word’ from the Lord’ and personal decision making. Overseers operating in the Holy Ghost are able to assist

in this, but it is critical that they do not encourage a dependent relationship by being prescriptive. Rather, as every good counsellor knows, the aim is to help each person to manage their own affairs.

The writer to the Hebrews calls the saints to ‘obey those who have the rule over you’ Heb.13:17). As noted above, we need to be careful not to interpret this in the way of the world. The original language suggests that the overseer, like any good magistrate, should help people think through a range of options with the objective of restoring unity – for this is the revealed will of God (Eph.1:9-10).

Overseers are an essential component of any Assembly of God’s people. God’s plan is for the older saints to be *gifted* for this ministry because they have the necessary experience and time to devote to providing this act of service. Like royalty, elders are called upon to set the standards, not only in word but ‘in deed’.

Ministers (Deacons)

The Greek word translated ministry is *diakoneo* together with a number of its derivatives. It is a word widely used in scripture and has a range of meanings relating to service. In his letter to Timothy, Paul recognises the office of deacon, i.e. a ministrant (I Tim.3:10-13) and the criteria he lists for holding this office are once again *household* attributes: blameless, a wife who is faithful, children who are in order, a well-run household. So, what do deacons have to do with the *ecclesia*? In my view, nothing out of the ordinary – they act as others act, seek a word of encouragement from the Lord and deliver it to the assembly. Ministry is fundamentally a **household office**. We create confusion when we make it an office of the *ecclesia*. There are no offices in the *ecclesia*. An overseer is not an overseer by appointment; he is an overseer by way of age and the gifting by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, a deacon ministers, not because he has been given a job in the assembly but because he is called to that high office in his own household by reason of age and responsibility.

Some churches have created a class of Deacons (capital ‘D’) to undertake tasks like putting out chairs and counting the cash, i.e. duties for people who have ‘not quite made the grade spiritually’! In other cases, Deacons are appointed to supervise class (home group) meetings. This is better but it still does not recognise that to appoint Deacons is to degrade the office that Jesus claimed would be the sign of greatness in the community of the redeemed (Matt.20:26-27)! In Acts 6, seven men were appointed to oversight the daily distribution. Some church leaders describe them as Deacons but Acts 6 does not mention the word *diakoneo*? These men were appointed to a particular task because they had already proved themselves to be capable ministers (*diakoneo*) **in their own households**. Being a minister is the normal business of the Kingdom for household leaders aged 30-50. It is the Lord who appoints and equips ministers, not church officials. The latter may only recognise what God has done. The distinction between appointing people to *be* Deacons as opposed to appointing deacons to public office may seem trivial but I see it as a matter of the utmost importance if we want to see our assemblies flourish.

Having said that, Ezekiel 44 recognises the call in the *ecclesia* is for ministers to ***minister to the Lord*** (Ezek.44), not to ‘men’. (The ministry to men we conduct in our homes). In an assembly meeting our first task is to stir up the gift that is within us so that Jesus may have His opportunity to declare unto the brethren the ‘Name of the Father’. In modern language the Name of the Father may be interpreted ‘the nature and mind of God’, something we constantly need to have reinterpreted to us so that we, His disciples, know how to act. In the midst of a drought, our assembly was encouraged by a word of prophecy to pray for rain. Several people doubted the prophecy, saying that Australia was not going to get rain until we got rid of things like abortion. But others reminded us that God is revealed as a God Who ‘sends rain on the just and the unjust’ (Matthew 5:45: God’s nature revealed). This set us free to pray for rain and four days later the opening rain came, to be followed throughout the season by above average precipitation. Clearly, this was a case in which revelation of the nature of God gave us insight into how we should act.

In summary then: outside of the *ecclesia* the first call for the *diakoneo* is to minister *in the household*. The foundational couple serve the dependent community under their roof in a thousand different ways. But having gained experience in their households, they may be called to minister to a widening community of believers, and it is a natural development that this may lead us into the office of oversight in the assembly. I trust that this throws light on what Paul is trying to communicate in his letter to Timothy.

Functionaries

Overseers and ministers are primary functionaries but the community of the redeemed requires people to meet a number of practical needs. In setting out some possible functionary offices we gain insight by referencing the Kingdom of David set up under God's instruction under the Old Covenant (I Chronicles, Chapters 20-31), for though the covenant has changed many of the practical matters remain.

The first thing that David did was to recognise *heads of principal households* to 'govern the sanctuary' and to 'order the service' (Chron.24:5). This supports the view that under the new covenant this duty should be fulfilled by a group of experienced mature elders (*presbuteros* Gk.), heads of households constituting the oversight team. We note also that under David the overseers worked in courses, i.e. took turns to officiate, and this agrees with the practice at Athens. In a small assembly there may be only one overseer. If so, he or she will have to take charge of most meetings. But the norm in a large assembly would be that a number of elders would take turns to fill this role.

David appointed Kohathites to carry the holy vessels and Merarites to manage the buildings (I Cor.24:20-31). Once again these people were drawn from the heads of the principal households. *They were not immature men*. For the *ecclesia* to operate well, someone needs to take responsibility for providing materials for the breaking of bread and

ensuring that there are enough chairs, a rostrum and an overhead projector. In our Assemblies (with all believers present) we seek the Lord for his suggestion as to whom we should appoint to handle various jobs. After a time of listening to the Lord and open discussion, we offer each job to a particular person, who is free to accept or not to accept the position. If they agree the whole assembly lays hands on them with prayer to indicate that we are not only giving them responsibility but authority to direct a particular operation. The value of this strategy is exemplified by a case in point that arose when several people argued in the assembly that our practice of using a common cup in the breaking of bread service was not hygienic, especially in the winter when people had heavy colds. This triggered considerable discussion in which a number of differing views were presented. In fact, the saints had a difficult time of coming to a conclusion until someone said: ‘Brothers and sisters, we have appointed brother A to look after the communion; why not ask him to pray about it and tell us what the Lord is saying’. It was agreed that this was the way to resolve the matter and a week later the brother announced that he felt the Lord would prefer us to stay with the common cup. And that was the end of the matter.

The next group that David appointed was the musicians and singers (I Chron.25:1-31). He was fortunate to have sufficient of these to set up twenty four groups to lead the worship *by courses*. We are all called to the ministry of worship in the tabernacle but some people have a special gift in music and song. They provide leadership by bringing forth the songs by which the Holy Spirit leads the congregation to understand the Lord’s purpose for the day. Under the new covenant we not only sing prepared songs from the repertoire but sometimes sing spontaneously both in our understanding and in the spirit, recognising that praise and high praise are significant weapons against the onslaught of the enemy.

Now we come to an important group that is often overlooked – porters, i.e. gate-keepers. Every *ecclesia* needs watchmen who keep the gate against the enemy. We have mentioned that some bad spirits may slip into

our assemblies if we are not careful, especially if the gate-keepers are not doing their job. Gate-keepers are usually back row people. They do not mind ministering at the door. David said he would rather be a door-keeper in the House of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness (Ps.84:10). A favourite Bible character of mine is Obed Edom (I Chron.13:13, etc.). I have often wondered about this man in whose house the Ark of the Covenant stayed for several months despite the fact that he lived in the land of the giants. I note that he was not only a gate-keeper but took his place amongst the praise contingent (I Chron.15:18, 21). He was a sort of all-round believer. But his greatest contribution was undoubtedly on the door where he not only served with distinction himself but trained up his sixty-six sons and grandsons to operate in that ministry (I Chron.26:8).

A FINAL NOTE

The structure and operation of the Lord's *ecclesia* is defined in precise prescriptions in the Biblical text. Notwithstanding, we seldom see it established in practice. The best Tabernacle of David that I have experienced was that established by the Catholic Renewal Team in Adelaide, South Australia in the mid-1970s. About 500 people from many denominations attended that occasional meeting. The number was so great that you could not sit down. It was wonderful to hear 'words' coming from all parts of the hall. Sometimes 'a word' would come and someone would call out: 'we have already had that down this end'! Most often there would be people alongside of you hailing Mary but this was no obstruction to the unity that we, Catholics and Protestants, felt in coming together in this manner.

The Lord is constantly offering His people the Tabernacle of David but His offer is not always taken up. I was involved with several Pentecostal groups in South Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At each site the Lord indicated His desire to set up the Tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11, Acts 15:16) but in each case the leadership, being threatened by the idea

that they would lose control, resisted its introduction. Thankfully, we do not need the approval of hierarchies to build a place of worship and praise. We can raise the tent in our homes and along the roadsides any time we wish to. Let's do it!

CHAPTER 10

DEFLECTIONS

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men... and not after Christ”, Col.2:8

How is it that the church has failed to retain the simplicity of the *ecclesia* as described in Acts? This is not the place to review the whole history of the church but a few pointers can be provided that might help assembly builders avoid moving into error.

Probably the biggest handicap for any church leader is the traditions they have picked up along the way. Paul in Colossians 2:8 warns us that even ‘good’ human traditions may derive not from Christ but from the ‘rudimentary spirits’ (Gk. *stoicheon*). As we have seen from our account of primal peoples, when we act out of tradition we not only exclude new information but are likely to move into apostate thinking. Similarly, we set ourselves up for failure when we act by implementing the latest fad for church growth found in the latest ‘how to do it’ book. Pastor Yonggi Cho built a church of over one million people in South Korea. Two of his disciples said: ‘let us go to the other side of the city and do the same thing’. They bought land and started reaching out to people in the same manner as they had seen Cho do it. The project failed completely and they went back to Cho in tears saying: ‘what went wrong?’ Cho said: ‘Did God tell you to plant a church’. They said: ‘No, we just decided to do what you had done’. ‘That is your problem’, said Cho (Yonggi Cho, 1979). This is a bigger problem in the church than we often think, both in the West and in the developing world. People set out to build churches out of human ambition, albeit ‘good’ ambition, rather than direction from the Lord of the Church. We often fail to see that our human ambitions are driven by those old Amorite spirits, pride and incorrigibility, that cause people to operate out of self-righteousness and denominational alliances.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

The history of the Church is filled with people who have developed dogmatic opinions as to what the Lord requires for the church. Some of them have the necessary social skills to promote their views and draw disciples after themselves. The aim is always to produce ‘a better church’ but the outcome is more often than not a split in the body that Jesus prayed should remain in UNITY (John 17). Splitting has become a common phenomenon since the Reformation; so much so that sociologists call the Post-Reformation years The Age of Schism. But the process was evident in earlier times.

For example, in the Second Century AD there was a man born into a Christian home called Marcion. He grew up to become a ship owner and merchant in the commercial Port of Sinope on the Black Sea (van den Heever & Scheffler, 2001). Marcion arrived in Rome in 140 AD during the Papacy of Higinus (136-140 AD). There he became a disciple of Cerdo the Syrian who introduced him to the ‘two gods position’, the idea that there is a God of the Old Testament (the creator God and ruler of this world whose attributes are law and justice) and another God who sent Jesus (an unknown and incomprehensible hidden God whose attributes are love and grace). The central idea of this position was that Jesus suffered death to free mankind from the claims of the Creator God and this led to a doctrinal emphasis on purity and perfection. Marriage and procreation were rejected because this would populate a world made by the Creator God! (All of this is not so wild an idea if you think about it. Unfortunately it is wrong! We need to be careful about good ideas). Marcion was excommunicated for continually pushing his views in the Roman Synod and this led him to form his own church. Apparently he had an intense personality and a sharp intellect that did not tolerate contradictions or compromise to his teachings. In other words, he practised charismatic domination (Parkin 1982) and it was not surprising that he should attract disciples, especially as he allowed women to be ordained into the priesthood! He travelled about with two women prophets by his side. In

quick time he built a considerable community that spread throughout Italy, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Armenia. His church survived until the 5th Century AD. Marcion's contribution to church literature is found in his *Evangelicon* (based on St Luke's Gospel) and the *Apostolicon* (the true letters of Paul). He removed from the canon all documents containing Old Testament references, i.e. all of the Old Testament, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John, Acts, Revelation and the general letters. 'Even the Gospel of Luke and Paul's letters had to be expunged of Old Covenant elements' (van den Heever & Scheffler, op cit)!

Marcion's success is a good example of what Augustine called 'the power of an idea'. How easy it is to be deflected from the Truth! Similar stories have been repeated countless times over the history of the church. I have referred to Marcion to show that the problem emerged early in church history. But sectarianism is alive and well in modern church movements. Those who leave the church to pursue purer doctrines nearly always find people splitting away from them at a later time. Why is this? Charles Taylor reminds us that terrorists leave their given society because they cannot abide the evil present but they are unmindful that they usually take the problem with them (Taylor 1989). It is all about being RIGHT, my position being better than yours, i.e. self-righteousness. In one area of South Africa that I know there were 19 Evangelical white assemblies in 1977 and 45 in 1987; 90% of the new churches had split from the old ones, and the process is continuing.

The problem of denominationalism in places like the USA is somewhat different. A lot of people were isolated in the early days of white settlement and churches grew up and developed different ideas and ways of doing things simply because they had no outside communication. Regrettably, once communication improved, people were set in their ways and could not build bridges with other groups. The church remained divided and the divisions were taken to the mission field to add to the sectarianism already developing there. In Malawi in 1979, seven USA-based Pentecostal Mission Churches decided to combine for Easter

Celebrations. But, where should they meet? If they met at the American Assemblies of God building, members of the African Assemblies and the Independent Assemblies might like the American Assemblies and leave their current denomination! One missionary couple with forty years of service with a Pentecostal Holiness Group went to a planning meeting. They reported to me their misgivings: 'It is not the Pentecost we know Brother Potter'! No wonder Jesus sweated blood in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed that we should be one!

In our first missionary years in Malawi, Judy and I mixed with people from every mission agency and enjoyed fellowship with all of them. We were invited to a Pentecostal prayer meeting soon after arriving. When I enquired whether it was a charismatic prayer meeting the coordinator replied: 'NO! It is Pentecostal! (At the time I had no idea there was any difference). After the meeting we were drinking tea. A vivacious young Canadian woman came up and spoke to us. The hostess passed by and hissed: 'Be careful, she is Jesus Only'. I had no idea what the danger was. I thought: 'if she is for Jesus only that might be a good thing'. The next day we received a letter from the young woman welcoming us to Malawi with a MK100 note inside for the work of 'our ministry'. What was wrong with that? I found out later that the 'Jesus only people' insist on baptising people in 'the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 19:5) and not in 'the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'(Matthew 28:19)! The Lord help us when we 'strain at a gnat' and miss the bigger picture.

The old churches come into a lot of criticism for their apostate practices but at least they keep the unity of the faith; and at the foundational level the principles of Christ are still to be found there. The Roman Catholic Church numbers around one billion people and is the greatest multi-cultural organisation on earth. The Evangelical, Back-to-the-Bible movement, on the other hand, has a sad history of splitting and moving into error. The Campbell brothers moved from Scotland to the USA to establish a pure Bible Pattern Church (the Churches of Christ) but they spawned John Thomas's Christadelphian movement that denies the

existence of the Holy Spirit and the Devil and insists that Jesus did not pre-exist His earthly birth. The Brethren started well in England and Ireland but the same doctrine, denying Jesus pre-existence, developed at Torquay. George Muller at Bristol was almost ex-communicated for allowing some Torquay brethren to share in the breaking of bread in his church and the furore that followed saw the movement split into Closed and Open arms. Watchman Nee was so disappointed and offended that he left the Brethren movement to form the Little Flock in China. In Texas, another group set out to establish THE (the one and only) New Testament Pattern Church but they split soon after formation because one group wanted to use musical instruments in worship services and another did not - on the ground that musical instruments were not mentioned in the New Testament! Some developed meeting structures close to the genuine *ecclesiastical* pattern but most of them introduced a sad restraint when they took the words of Paul that women should not speak in the church as law. The result was that some of God's best prophets were silenced. The Evangelicals threw out spiritual gifts and this caused them to preach against them when the Holy Spirit fell on the churches in the 1960-70s. The Pentecostal churches are not so different; they have their own demons. Practising a gift-man theology, leaders commonly exercise a strong domination over their flocks, based on their charisma and their supposed superior Bible knowledge. The emphasis moves from the Lord Himself speaking His encouragements into the *ecclesia* to the Senior Pastor issuing his instructions for the week. If an individual member has a need, they are told to seek out the gift man, if and when he might be available. It is all very sad. One revelatory thought experience provides the springboard for an individual to claim special appointment from Heaven. The special revelation becomes fixed in space and time, the focal point for Christian action rather than the ongoing intimacy with the Lord of Glory that the Tabernacle of David provides. The tragedy of this is not so much the introduction of error but the exclusion of what is necessary for the church to be successful in its mission. Paul put it this way:

‘I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who *cause divisions* and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine which you have learned. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive (Romans 16:17)

ALLIANCES

It is one thing to receive special revelation and another to have the opportunity to promote it. The best way of gaining access to an audience is via an alliance, and there is nothing wrong with alliances *per se*. Paul was an Israelite, a Hebrew of the Hebrews and, as touching the law, a Pharisee (Phil.3:5). This gave him entrance to synagogues wherever he went, e.g. at Ephesus (Acts 18:4). I have a doctoral degree and this opens doors for me in Africa and other places. There is nothing wrong with that. The problem comes when an individual uses an alliance to build his/her own power base. I am commonly asked: to what group do you belong, what is your covering? (Apparently people have not read I Cor.11:3). Friends, it is not a matter of what group I belong to, it is a matter of how I will behave if I am given the opportunity to speak. If I am going to use the opportunity to bring division and draw disciples after myself then I should not be allowed in, let alone invited back!

It is nice to belong, to have a spiritual home, but a problem arises for people like me who are called to work across denominational boundaries. To get involved with one group exclusively would inevitably compromise my life and calling; I would be required to surrender certain freedoms that are mine through following the Holy Spirit for the past forty years. My choice is to remain free and trust the Lord to open doors for me to share some thoughts if and when He decides that I should do so. He is the Lord who opens doors that no man can shut and shuts doors that no man can open (Rev.3:8).

For forty-one years I was a Methodist and this meant that I could not

break bread and drink the cup in my own home with my family and friends because the denomination required that an ordained minister be present. One evening the Lord instructed me to break bread with a group of Methodist brethren who were gathered in our home. When I announced this one person objected, saying that we were breaking a church ordinance. I asked the people to pray about it and six people came up to me privately to tell me that the Lord had instructed them that we should 'not offend a weaker brother'. I did not announce this but simply laid the breaking of bread aside. The law-abiding brother said afterwards that he had never felt such love from people as he experienced that night! I was impressed with that because I could have said: 'Look brother, the church cannot control my actions in my own home, and the Lord has commanded me to break bread; who am I to obey, God or man?' That would have caused division and the loss of fellowship. It proved better to not offend the brother and by that means achieve the fellowship the Lord was seeking another way!

I have no problems with submitting to church ordinances when I am working in a particular denomination. I taught counselling in a large Baptist church for several years; while I was with them I was a Baptist. When I am with the brotherhood of Jean Baptiste de la Salle, I am a Catholic. They are all my brethren and I am happy to be amongst them when there is some purpose in it. In Africa I have been a Pentecostal, a member of the Free Church of Christ, an adherent of the Panhandle Church of Christ, an associate of the Evangelical Church of Malawi, and taught in Presbyterian Churches. I have learned that 'being right' only cuts me off from fellowship, from being received as a brother (like Quartus, Rom.16:23) which is always my high objective. For the record, please understand that I have no problem with people belonging to a particular denomination if that is where they are called to be. Although the problem remains that we have a church divided.

It is one thing to join a denomination but another to build an alliance with the world system. Christianity was birthed into a Roman Empire whose

guiding principle had moved from an SPQR democracy to an Imperial system under Caesar Augustus. The early church was a vigorous movement, and it was inevitable that it should find itself persecuted by both the Jewish hierarchy (Acts 4-8) and the Roman authorities. But persecution proved to be no hindrance to church development:

‘The Emperors opposed it as disloyal and revolutionary and more than once put forth their whole strength to root it out. But the unity of the Empire, and the ease of communication through its parts, favoured the spread of Christianity; persecution scattered the seeds more widely, forced on (the church) a firm organisation (and) gave it martyr heroes and a history’ (Bryce, 1890, p.10).

But you can get tired of persecution, and when Constantine took Christianity to be the religion of the Empire in 323 AD the Church was willing to repay him with submission. But this meant that the Church was effectively governed by the Central State, because when the church was ‘called from danger and ignominy to the seat of power it was inevitable that her established governing body and ecclesiastical organisation... would *become the Empire’s counterpart*’ (Bryce 1890). For, where her own machinery was defective, as in the job of maintaining doctrinal purity, the Central Church could now call on the sovereign to support their case. In everything she strove not to sink into the imperial system but was guilty of reproducing it. Just as the independent rights of districts, towns and tribes disappeared under the Empire, so the primitive freedom and diversity of individual Christians and local churches were ‘overborne by the idea of one visible catholic Church, uniform in faith and doctrine and uniform in her relation to the civil power’. This precipitated a hierarchy of patriarchs, metropolitans and bishops whose jurisdiction was not maintained by good relations with the brethren but enforced by the Laws of the State. The Emperor became the virtual head of the Church and Church officers were pleased to see him preside over its councils and issue edicts against heresy, for, ‘though the tone of the Church remained humble, by this alliance her strength waxed greater’ (see Bryce op cit).

However, due to the decrepitude of the old Roman institutions it was to the Church that the people more and more sought to attach themselves. The surprising result was that by AD 379, a mere fifty years after Constantine, Emperor Theodosius was forced to admit the supremacy of spiritual authority over temporal authority; and by AD 398 Pope Athastasius was sufficiently empowered to resist and triumph in opinion over Honorius, the Western Emperor of his day. The dark side of this process was the burial of the simplistic *ecclesia* under a pile of apostate principles and practices, a process completed in AD 367 when the Emperor Gratian found the artefacts of the Pontifex Maximus (ex-Pergamum) and gave them to the Bishop of Rome who, sadly, put them on!

Jesus said that we were to render to Caesar what is Caesar's and render to God what is God's. He did not say get in bed with Caesar and run the church by the systems of this present world. Worldly power is of no consequence in the Kingdom of God. We do harm to God's program if we are seduced into moving in that direction. The Three Self Church in China today seems to be a similar case to that of Rome in the 4th Century AD.

REPELLING ATTACKS

I have found that there is a pattern to the spiritual attacks that come upon a burgeoning *ecclesia*. I deal with four of them here.

Legalism

Early in the development of our Assembly one of our brethren invited a house fellowship group to join us at our Sunday morning meeting. The group were active in music ministry and we enjoyed their fellowship. When we came to the breaking of bread, one of them rushed out of the meeting and returned with an unleavened Motza biscuit and threw it on the communion table alongside of the leavened bread that we normally used. This morning I felt to invite people to come in small groups and

kneel around the table. As it turned out I found myself kneeling alongside the matriarch of the visiting group and, as I reached to take up the bread, she hissed at me: 'be careful brother, there is too much bad practice in the church without you adding to it'. I laid my hand on her shoulder and said, 'Be free sister'. She refused to participate in our little ceremony as did the rest of her group when I laid their biscuit aside. After the meeting I pointed out to their leader that while the Passover bread was unleavened the Pentecostal loaf was leavened (Lev.23:15-17), but he was not prepared to discuss the issue. Later I found out that this group had developed the strong opinion that all the problems of the church related to the failure of churches to use the right bread in the communion service! They saw their whole mission in life as correcting this bad practice and visited different churches each week to that end. Their habit was to sit in the front row and read from very big Bibles during the sermon, presumably to show their disdain for what was being spoken. Not surprisingly, they soon became very isolated, but their big idea had so dominated their thinking and actions that, sad to say, they could not join anybody who thought differently from themselves. We resisted their legalism with as much grace as we could. If we had gone down that path there would have been no end to the people that the enemy of our souls would have sent to deflect us further from the simple faith we had that Jesus was present to minister to us His grace and wisdom when we met together in His *ecclesia*.

Did God Say?

This is an old one (Genesis 3:1) but it will almost certainly come against you when you move in faith to build an assembly. It normally comes from people within the developing group who have ambitions in ministry, and it usually emerges soon after the Lord gives the group a vision to build the Tabernacle, because the Tabernacle offers no place for those wishing to have control and dominate others. They say: 'how do you know this vision is from God?' To which you reply: 'I am pretty sure that it is'. They say: 'we are against it, are you going to listen to your brethren!' By

which they mean: ‘are you willing to come under our authority!’ You say: ‘shall I obey God or man?’ They say: ‘we are leaving’ and the implication is ‘we are taking our money with us’! It is always sad to see a subtraction in fellowship but it happened even in the early church (Acts 5:1-11).

The Jewish Question

There are other things that I have had to deal with in developing a genuine *ecclesia* that I will not speak about here - let the Holy Spirit be the leader’s guide, not my prescription. But I will mention the Jewish Question. This is usually the last attack. The idea here is that the Jews are God’s chosen people so we Gentiles may only be blessed as long as we recognise that we have been grafted into the Israel Tree (Romans 11:17). The proponents of this notion tell us that the Lord will not return until old Israel calls: ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord’, so it is our job to encourage Israel above all other matters. Of course, it is actually no different from the argument presented by Pharisees in Acts 15 that the Gentiles need to be circumcised. By this view, the Jews come first and have prior rights over Gentiles. And the agents of the enemy will arrive to tell you that: ‘This church will not be blessed unless it blesses the Jews’.

It happened to us one Sunday morning. Two young men and a girl arrived and sat somewhat uncomfortably in our meeting. Being an overseer that prays with one eye open I watched them with interest. They took no part in the proceedings – just watched, except when it came to a time when everyone was encouraged to spend a moment greeting the brethren. I saw then that this group approached the people in our assembly who were the weakest in doctrine; they picked them out with uncanny skill. When it came to the time of breaking bread, one of our young women brought a prophetic invitation for everyone to come to the table to enjoy the good things of the Lord. The visitors were unmoved. We were standing but they were sitting with their arms folded. As the prophetic invitation continued I went over to them and added my invitation for them to join us in

communion. They said: 'No thank you'. So I said: 'If you don't want to join in the fellowship, why are you here?' They said: 'We know what we are doing'. To which I replied: 'Well, I do not know what you are doing but I want you to know that I am watching you closely'. They left a few minutes after that. After the meeting I approached the 'weaker members'. They told me that the three people had come from a Lutheran fellowship some distance away. (Hence their reluctance to join in the communion; Lutherans are not allowed to break bread with other denominations). They had told our people our church would fail if it did not bless the Jews! As it happened, one of our people had a strong thing going about the Jews and the visit of these young people triggered her to pick up the Jewish theme so strongly that it was needful that I shared a little from the Letter to the Galatians soon after in order to make the correction. This lady also left!

I have been astonished in recent times to notice the determination of some to bring the church under Israel. I see all sorts of people waving Israeli flags in meetings and am left wondering what it is all about. Do they not read the Bible? Do they not understand that Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16) and that God has in Christ made of both Jew and Gentile 'one new man' (Eph.2:11-22)? Perhaps the most astonishing thing of all is to find some Bible translations give Acts 15:16 as: 'I will return and build again the HOUSE of David which is fallen down'. You cannot get a more determined and direct attack on the Davidic Tabernacle (tent) than that!

The Direct Control Approach

Even after the *ecclesia* is up and running you will have your problems. In one assembly where I was an overseer we regularly had people turning up saying: 'God told us to come here'. 'You are very welcome', we would reply, feeling blessed that God had seen fit to tell somebody to come and see for themselves what a brilliant assembly we had! What we did not know was that the new comers often felt that God had sent them to us 'to put us straight'! They would wait their time but sooner or later it would come out.' Why do you people not have a pastor?' To which we would

reply: ‘We do have people who are acting as pastors in their homes’. ‘But why not have Pastor (capital P) who runs the church?’ ‘Well, we believe that Jesus is the Head of the Church and we think that He is well able to lead us if we listen to Him. He turns up most Sundays when we meet so we don’t need a human to lead us’. Such people will persist until they finally take over or leave. It is hard to help them know that God has prescribed a better thing for the church than human domination.

WHAT ARE WE DEFENDING?

It seems to me there are only two ways to build an assembly: (1) replicate the denominational structure in which we are located; or (2) get in touch with the Holy Spirit and follow His instructions. I have found grace to follow the latter course but does that make what I have built superior to other denominational structures? We need to think about this otherwise we do not know what we are defending when we encounter deflections and attacks. In Africa I have encountered a myriad of structures all working towards the same goal with varying degrees of success. Will any kind of structure do, as long as it gets the job done?

It seems to me that the answer to this question depends on what we expect to happen when we ‘go to church’. What I have attempted to outline in this section of this book is that we need to allow Jesus to build His *ecclesia* (as he said he would), so that we are equipped to know God’s purposes, find our authority in Him, and be given specific instructions that empower us to participate constructively in establishing the Kingdom of God on Planet Earth.

PART III

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER 11

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The prayer that Jesus taught us calls for the Kingdom of God to ‘come on Earth as it is in heaven’. And now we see that, post Calvary, we have a part in making that a reality. But what would the Earth look like under the Kingdom of God? For, unless we know that we are unlikely to work effectively towards that end?

In the final chapter of his history of African Christianity, Mark Shaw (1996) offers a Table in which he marries eight models of the Kingdom of God on Earth proposed by Howard Snyder (1991) with various views of the Kingdom that have appeared in Africa over time. The eight models he groups under three headings:

1. The **Sovereign Reign of God** view:

- **The Theocratic Model** – the Christian Political State, e.g. Byzantium, Ethiopia, Nubia, Portugal and Afrikaanerdome.
- **The Churchly Model** – the Kingdom as the Institutional Church, e.g. The Cyprian Church, Donatism, St Augustine, Roman Catholicism prior to Vatican II, Zionist Churches in Southern Africa and latter day Ethiopian Churches.

2. The **Redemptive Reign of Christ** view:

- **The Transformation Model** – the Kingdom as Christianised Society, e.g. St Augustine, David Livingstone and the Clapham Sect.

- **The Inner Model** – the Kingdom as an inner spiritual experience, e.g. Gnosticism, Andrew Murray, New Religious Movements like Kumuyi's Deeper Life Bible Church.
- **The Heavenly Model** – the Kingdom as mystical communion, e.g. Monasticism, Liturgical Churches.

3. The **Kingdom as Peace and Justice** view:

- **The Subversive Model** – the Kingdom as Counter-Culture, e.g. St Antony, the Curcuncellions, the Coptics, Alice Leshina in Zambia, Alice Kekwana in Uganda and Liberation Theology.
- **The Utopia Model** – the Kingdom as a Just Society (earthly paradise), e.g. the World Council of Churches, Zionism, Messianic Nationalism, Nkrumah in Ghana.
- **The Future Kingdom Model** – Tertullian, Dispensationalism, some African Independent Churches, Old Pentecostalism.

The above summary demonstrates that, over time, Christians have had a very mixed, even confused idea as to what the Kingdom on Earth should look like. Can we take it that the various emphases (above) are all legitimate facets of a complex whole, or are they all missing the mark to some extent? If it is the first, then the Lord has made the Kingdom very difficult for humans to apply. If it is the latter, then what is the Kingdom? For the existence of eight models (above) suggests that the church in the Times of the Gentiles (AD 25 to AD 1985) either has been working out of a mix of human pre-suppositions rather than listening carefully to the teachings of Jesus as revealed by the Holy Spirit, or has been listening, but had a problem in interpreting what the Spirit is looking for.

AN EXPANDING REVELATION

One explanation as to why there have been differing views is that there has been a problem of interpretation and that God has been working throughout human history to bring the church to a place of understanding. Such a view is supported by the pioneering work of the apostle Paul and others at Ephesus. If we look closely at Acts 18 and 19 we will see that there were seven stages in the development of the church at Ephesus, which we may define as follows:

- **The Traditional Phase** (Acts 18:19-21): When Paul arrived in Ephesus he first visited the synagogue and pleaded the cause of Jesus there with some success. This confirms what we have found in practice: when God moves He never bypasses His people, no matter what their doctrinal practices. I see a comparison between the Jews in Paul's day and the Liturgical Churches in our day. Just as Paul was well received on this first visit, so today we find that the old churches are filled with people who are open to the gospel if they get to hear it. They were certainly the most open to the move of the Holy Spirit in the 1960-70s, the so-called Charismatic Movement which began with the Catholics, then the Lutherans, then the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians. An erstwhile colleague of mine, Gerald Rowlands, has a specific calling to take the Gospel to traditional church people and has done it with great effect over the years. Like Paul who left Ephesus to catch up with his brethren at Antioch, Gerald was not called to stay with the old churches but to move on to other destinations where his ministry was needed.
- **The Scripture Phase** (Acts 18:24-28): While Pauls was away, Apollos, an eloquent man mighty in the scriptures, arrived from Alexandria and taught diligently the things of the Lord but knew only the baptism of John (water baptism). Apollos reminds us of the classical Evangelical, using the scriptures to convince his hearers that Jesus was the Christ. This seems to be a good thing to do BUT

(against common sense) it is what Jesus told us *not* to do (Matt.16:20). When Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's disciples from Corinth heard him, they took him aside and 'explained unto him the way of God more perfectly' (Acts 18:26). We understand why they did this. In our time the Evangelical Churches are strong in Biblical knowledge but low in intimacy with Jesus. I am not here to judge them, but I agree with Aquila and Priscilla that the way to God is not *primarily* via Bible knowledge. Knowing Jesus in the inner man must take precedence. After that Bible knowledge is critical in keeping us 'in the way'.

- **The Charismatic Phase** (Acts 19:1-7): The next thing that happened at Ephesus was that Paul returned, and finding certain disciples asked them the important question: 'Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?' Finding that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit he baptised them again and they came out of the water speaking in tongues and prophesying! In our day we may call Paul's question the Pentecostal question for it is the task of genuine Pentecostals to travel the world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help people discover the *Logos* within. I have known and worked with a few of them and precious people they are. It is a specific calling. Unfortunately, problems arise when Pentecostals try to build churches for their doctrine tends to be purely Evangelical.
- **The Discipling Phase** (Acts 19:8-10): After Paul had laid hands on the Ephesian disciples and seen them filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues and prophesying, he went back to the synagogue to reason again with the Jews a second time. This time he was not well received and when some said that the Way of the Lord was evil he left, taking his disciples with him to the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). There he set up his household and began teaching the things of Christ daily. It is of the greatest possible significance that, as a result of this action, *the whole of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus* in 'the space of two years' (Acts 19:10)!!

- **The Witnessing Phase** (Acts 19:11-12): Thereafter, we note that significant miracles began to occur at Ephesus. The disciples of Paul carried handkerchiefs over which Paul had prayed and there were abundant healings and much deliverance from demonic spirits (Acts 19:11). Many individual Christians have participated in this kind of ministry in the last several decades. We look for the day when it becomes common practice in the churches.
- **The Convicting Phase** (Acts 19:13-17): But the real change came when certain vagabond exorcists tried to cast the devil out of people using the name of Jesus. Lacking genuine spiritual authority they were badly beaten. When the word got around, a Godly fear fell on both Jews and Greeks, so that ‘many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds’ (Acts 19:18). Purveyors of occult books and witchcraft artefacts came and burned them and the Word of God grew and prevailed! We look for a time when there is general repentance amongst the populace. It is badly needed.
- **The Prevailing Phase** (Acts 19: 18-20): The last phase in the development of the church in Ephesus was a backlash from the merchants who made their living selling artefacts of the Goddess Diana. This led to a public confrontation between the forces of God and the forces of the Apostasy. But the church at Ephesus prevailed and became a major centre of Christian witness in its time. We too can expect ongoing opposition until Jesus comes. Dealing with this with grace is a major challenge, as the Puritans in Britain found in their day.

In thinking about these phases, I have noticed that they are congruent with several other patterns in scripture: the Feasts of Israel, the Tabernacle Pattern and the Principle of Death and Resurrection of a Vision (see below). I have summarised these congruencies in Fig.2. All of this persuades me that the Acts passage gives us insight into God’s Master Plan in history. For the history of the church in the time of the Gentiles

follows the same pattern precisely as we look at the denominations today. (Denominations result from camping around a revelation and making it a tradition – beware of such behaviour, Col.2:8).

Figure 2: Phases in Church Development

The Historic Church (emphasis)	The Feasts of Israel	The Tabernacle Pattern	Death and Resurrection Phases
Liturgical – The Cross	Passover	Brazen Altar	Excitement
Evangelical – Scripture	Unleaven Bread	Laver	Experimental
Pentecostal – Holy Spirit	First Fruits	Anointing Oil	Explanation Cost
Ecclesia – Obedience	Pentecost	Entering	Cross
Healing - Miracles	Trumpets	Shewbread	Exam
Convicting -Repentance	Atonement	Lampstand	Executive
Prevailing - Restoration	Tabernacles	Altar of Incense	Extensive

First we have the ‘traditional churches’ (Phase 1): the Catholic and Orthodox, Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians. Next we have Back to the Bible churches which have thrown out the Holy Spirit and know only the baptism of John (Phase 2). Then we have the Pentecostals introducing us to the Holy Spirit (Phase 3), helping us to receive Him and reinstating the value of speaking in tongues and prophecy. After that (since Vatican 2 and the Charismatic movement of the 1960-1970s) we have seen the development of Community Churches of all shapes and sizes, some disastrous but some learning how to walk as sons, in obedience, to begin taking the land. So far, we have seen very little of a Witnessing, Convicting and Prevailing Church, except perhaps in China and to some extent in places like Malaysia and Indonesia. Individuals (first fruits) have demonstrated the possibilities – Smith Wigglesworth and Oral Roberts to name just two. But they were individuals; what we are looking for is communities like Paul’s

community at the School of Tyrannus that will influence whole populations, not just a few people in a community. Something seems to be stirring in the Pacific where whole nations are presently making covenant with God. But we are not yet seeing witchcraft exposed and dealt with as happened at Ephesus.

What is certain is that participation in a genuine *ecclesia* is not the end point of Christian practice! If we wish to impact our communities for the Kingdom of God we need to move beyond the *ecclesia* to participate in three final Holy Spirit-led phases of Christian practice: witnessing with signs (miracles) accompanying, seeing the Lord bring conviction, and seeing the Word of God (Jesus) prevail over whole communities. This is what the next chapters of this book are about.

If we accept the above pattern, I think it will be obvious why the church is failing to meet its objectives in our time. Most Christians participate in Stage 1, 2 and 3 churches; they seem to be unwilling to embrace a full participation in God's purposes. The Lord keeps telling me that He has His Army in place, so I am encouraged to believe that what I am sharing will not entirely fall on deaf ears, that there are people out there ready to get the job done. If so, then let me emphasise again that it is only via the establishment of an *ecclesia* built by Jesus, like that at the School of Tyrannus, that we can hope to enter into productive Christian life and find that the gates of hell cannot prevail against us.

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

Returning to our questions, 'what does the Kingdom on Earth look like and how do we bring it about', my current view is as follows:

Structure

If we want to know what the Kingdom of God looks like, **we need go no**

further than the New Testament account of the life of Jesus. The Kingdom of God comes when individual humans receive the Holy Spirit and begin to work out of that relationship in obedience to the Word within. This is the New Covenant relation (Jer.31:33-34, Heb.8:10-12). The external manifestation is seen in strong Godly households and communities that come together to seek the mind of God when there is a need to do so. There are no other structures ordained by God apart from the household and the *ecclesia*. And it is significant that the structure of Pty Ltd companies holds to the *ecclesiastical* structure, having a group of directors (overseers) and a group of managers (ministers).

Process

The job at hand for individuals and communities who wish to see the Kingdom of God established on Earth is to:

- Live in an intimate relation with the Lord by the New Covenant provision of the indwelling Spirit, personally and corporately in households and in the *ecclesia*.
- Live an ordered life in which people of various ages address their opportunities and responsibilities, as described in the chapter on Households.
- To develop skills and knowledge relating to the management of the *cosmos*, personally and in groups (businesses).

There is one problem with this view. It ignores the reality that there is spiritual opposition to all of these activities from a horde of demons. We have to learn how to operate in a hostile spiritual environment and in the process prevail against them; and in that way bring the *cosmos* back under God's government. This is essentially what the rest of this book is about.

CHAPTER 12

BEYOND THE ECCLESIA

*“Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,
let us go on unto maturity”, Hebrews 6:1*

In this chapter I want to suggest that the body of Christ is much more than a collection of households who attend public *ecclesiastical* meetings. Just as we are called under the New Covenant arrangement to a life of personal obedience and spiritual individualism yet work out our salvation within the structure of a household, so the membership of each household is called to recognise that there is a structure beyond the household into which they have been set. For, we are not called to casual relationships on Sundays but to be living stones built up into a spiritual house that offers up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ on a permanent ongoing day-by-day basis (I Peter 2:5).

PRAYER SCHOOLS

I first encountered Prayer Schools in the middle 1980s. At that time my wife and I were heading up a community called the People of the Way at Blackwood in South Australia. The Lord spoke to me along these lines: ‘I want you to run a school of prayer’. I had no idea what constituted a school of prayer but the Lord arranged for a woman who had run a number of prayer groups to join our assembly for a season. She reported to me how the Lord had led her to help people pray more effectively by getting them to pray in tongues for half an hour and then report the thoughts that had come into their minds. This idea appealed to me because there were people in our group who felt defeated in prayer.

When the prayer group met for the first time, I explained that we would pray for a while without speaking in English. Even if we felt a strong

impulse to sing a hymn or spiritual song we should hold back until the whole group felt it was time to stop praying. Only then would we share what we felt the Lord had been saying to us. It was good to see everybody enter into the task with enthusiasm for, as the scripture says, he that prays in an unknown tongue ‘edifies himself’ (I Cor.14:4). After about twenty minutes it became apparent that we were being led by the Holy Spirit to stop praying and share the thoughts that had come into our minds. It was extremely encouraging for beginners to find that they had received the same ‘word’ as someone else. We appointed a recorder to write down everything so that, after the meeting, we could consider more carefully what the Lord had been saying to us. Over the next forty days, we prayed weekly in this manner. The record showed a remarkable pattern. We discovered that unwittingly we had prayed through several key ‘spiritual battles’ that bore close resemblance to the account of David and his mighty men (I Chron.11: 11, 13-14, 17-19 and 22-23). What did all of this mean?

The prayer time had two positive results. Firstly, many who had previously been defeated in prayer found a new sense of authority. One woman had been ‘sung’ by aborigines in the Northern Territory some years before. When she came to us she reported that every morning when she woke the first thought that came to her mind was ‘kill yourself’. This had been going on for some years but after the prayer school it never happened again. In fact, within a few months of the prayer school the woman received a sovereign call to minister in Africa. The head of the mission in which she worked told me that the thing that impressed them most about her was the strength of her prayer life!

The second benefit was that the notion of *ministering in courses* became a reality for us. As the overseer of the group I had been aware of the spiritual oppression that was against us on a daily basis since the group first formed. After the prayer school I would wake in the morning aware that the enemy was throwing something at us but at six in the evening the oppression would suddenly leave me. Then the phone would ring and one

or other of our people would say: ‘What is going on John, I have just come under something’. To which I would reply: ‘Good, I have been under it all day, now it is your turn to be on the walls’. It seemed to us that through the prayer school the Holy Spirit was now able to share the battle with the many rather than the few.

This experience opened up to our community the possibility that we can live in a continuum consisting of our personal walk, our household walk and our community walk – all at the same time. For a Westerner, this was something of a revelation because, as we have seen, one of the great malaises operating in Western culture is a form of individualism that isolates us in an extreme way. That this is counter-productive for the church is evident for it allows Christians to feel fulfilled in a walk that allows them to walk in nothing but personal obedience. ‘Look, I am doing what God told me to do. It is not my responsibility to worry about what other people are doing’. No attitude could be more damaging to the Kingdom of God.

By way of contrast, my friends in Africa hold to a totally different view. In 1978 several of our Malawian disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit for the first time. I was surprised when, after praying in tongues for several hours, one of them started crying out with a loud voice: ‘Lord, send the Holy Spirit’. Having just been filled with the Holy Spirit, why would someone ask the Lord to send the Holy Spirit? Over the next few days, the reason became plain. The experience he had had was outside of community norms and this made him feel very uncomfortable. His life-long training suggested to him that to be unusual was to risk being treated as a non-person, to be exiled, cast out of the tribe. This was unacceptable to him; if he was going to be filled with the Holy Spirit then it was important that all of his clan should know the same experience. Africans do not find living in the Lord’s spiritual house (community) difficult. It is a natural extension of a principle learned at their mother’s knee. It is only in the West that individualism dominates thinking and practice.

TOWARDS UNITY

That the old churches are full of apostate practices is clear enough (see Hislop, 1959) and it is understandable that some Christians have felt obliged to escape their boundaries in order to develop a church more closely aligned with the New Testament practice. But, as noted above, the Reformation, so revered in Western history, precipitated an Age of Schism (church splitting) and the resulting sectarian conglomerate has profoundly contributed to the in-effectiveness of Christianity in our day. It seems to me urgent that we rediscover each other in a non-sectarian world; take off our denominational garments and come before the Lord in the simplicity of the *ecclesia*. Only then can the Kingdom of God advance. George Otis Jnr. has emphasised this in his Transformation videos. Real gains have been made when Christians have put aside their differences and sought the Lord's strategies for their time and place. How unfortunate that it takes a serious confrontation with the powers of darkness to break us out of sectarian complacency.

In 1977-79 in Malawi, our household worked closely with numerous missionaries and over two hundred registered denominations. Sixty-four of the established denominations in Malawi were founded by missionaries, the rest were so-called Independent Churches that had split off from mission churches for a variety of (sometimes trivial) reasons. (In 1979 there were some 7000 independent denominations in Africa (Turner 1967, Sunkler 1948, Wishlade 1966, Weaver 1970 and Daneel 1972). We did not find it difficult to be in unity with 'the brethren'. When you meet in a brother's household, you submit to his way of doing things. I have taken communion on my knees at the rail of an Anglican church, in my seat at a Baptist Church and around the table at the Panhandle Church of Christ. Why not? Outside of formal meetings, on the mission field we found nothing but cooperation and support from other missionaries. Paul shows how this may come about in his letter to the Philippians (Phil.2:1-4). "OK" he says, 'You have a church community where Jesus is known and appreciated, where love is the guiding principle, where the Holy Spirit

orders the camp and practical support operates, BUT please, *complete my joy by being in one accord, of one mind!*' This is where the *ecclesia* is of such a profound importance. If we come together and find the mind of the Lord for our situation we are bound to be in one accord – read Acts 15 again.

Paul adds a few practical suggestions (Phil.2:3-4). 'Don't do anything to promote yourself or bring division; keep in mind that you don't know everything. You can learn from others if you take the time to stop talking and listen. And don't be so consumed with your own vision and work that you don't take time to watch and see if another person's work needs your assistance' (my paraphrase). This is how we worked with great effect in Zomba, Malawi in the late seventies. Our comrades in arms were American Southern Baptists, US Assemblies of God, the Panhandle Church of Christ, Anglicans, Pentecostal Holiness, Church of God, Presbyterian, Church of the Nazarene, Apostolic Church of Pentecost, Free Church of Christ, Abraham Church, Judgement Church and three thousand un-named village congregations. Most of the missionaries, like us, were strangers in a strange land; we needed one another at a personal and practical level. Unity is not hard to gain, unless of course you are self-righteous and believe that only your denomination has the truth.

The essential matters in church practice are few in number. In Acts 2 we read that when people received the *Logos* they were baptised, cutting away their old relationships in order to enter into a brand new social experience. This led them to continue *steadfastly* in: (1) the apostle's doctrine – practices, not good ideas (2) fellowship with other believers; (3) breaking of bread; and (4) prayers. We note also that they had all things in common, selling their goods and distributing the money to those that had a need. To such a church *God added people daily*.

In Acts 3 we find the church experiencing miracles and coming into conflict with the Prince of this World (note that the pattern agrees with the Acts 18/19 passage outlined above). This leads in Acts 4 to one of the

great prayers of scripture, a prayer that leads to *the whole assembly* being filled afresh with the Holy Spirit and speaking the word of God with *boldness*. Again we note that the believers were of one heart and soul (in accord) and had all things in common and witnessing with *great power* to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is just the beginning. History reports that in the next few years a few Galilean fishermen turned the whole civilized world upside down. And what about Paul's disciples at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus, by whom the Word of the Lord was revealed to *every person in the whole of Asia* in the space of two years! Spreading the gospel is simple enough. Set up the Tabernacle of David, get your instructions from heaven, maintain unity and the kingdoms of this world can become the Kingdom of Christ in our generation!

KINGDOM ECONOMICS

I want to say a little more about money. The record of the early church in Acts tells us that:

‘Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them... brought the proceeds to the apostles and distribution was made to every man according as he had need’ (Acts 4:24-35).

I do not read that funds were collected to pay the senior pastor, or to install a new sound system and padded seats in the church meeting place. The *ecclesia* is an occasional meeting. It can be held in a house, in a hired hall or in the open air. Paying the rent on a facility for the meeting should not be a big expense. If the overseers are operating in courses, each chair person, being a household leader, should be able to meet the rent on the day that he is presiding. Tithing to a church is very counter-productive. If the ministries of Christ are located in the household it is the household leaders that need money – not ecclesiastical administrators.

The old churches established a workable system. Picking up the pagan

practice of confession it was a natural extension to demand penance. That this, plus donations from the well-to-do who wished to build permanent monuments to themselves, was sufficient to make the church rich is evident in the vast property holdings of the established church; cathedrals, schools, monasteries abound, even in the developing world. The problem with this system was that the church establishment became rich while the parishioners remained poor. Jesus did not tell us to build cathedrals – he asked us to participate with Him in Taking the Land.

The evangelical churches preach a legalistic form of tithing. According to them if you do not give a tenth of your income to the church you are ‘cheating God’ (Malachi 3:8). But this is clearly an Old Covenant notion and open to abuse. You can always tell a religious spirit – it puts the pressure on human performance and not on the Lord. The tithing system works well in affluent societies where people give something to the church because they are persuaded that it will bless their business or out of a sense of guilt. It is a catharsis – a replacement for confession; you feel better after you have given something ‘to the Lord’! In the NW of the USA Pentecostal Pastors claim that the tithes are due to them personally and it is not unusual to find Pastors in that area who are multi-millionaires. Parishioners slave in positions of employment or small businesses to keep the pastors in luxury. I find it hard to find such a doctrine in early church practice. In fact, the New Testament hardly mentions tithing at all and when it does it is contrary to evangelical practice. The book of Hebrews makes it plain that our High Priest (Jesus) is a *household priest* after the order of Melchi-zedec. Abraham tithed to Melchi-zedec, *before the law was established*, to bless the head of his household in the primal manner. My friends in Africa understand this – if your brothers and sisters are in need, and you have resources, you cannot stand by and let them starve or remain unclothed. Mind you, this is not a recipe for the lazy to live off everyone else. Paul was clear about that and set a good example (II Thess. 3:7-10).

One of the problems for me is that churches in the West utilise 99% of

their income on new buildings, public address systems, paying the Pastor's salary and setting up television ministries and book stores. In other words, Western Christians contribute funds 'to the Lord' but spend them on their own personal comfort. One commentator said it this way: 'Christians in the West tithe to themselves'. In most developed countries, giving to missionary effort averages \$10 per household *per year*! No wonder we are losing the battle with Islam, paganism and secular humanism, all of whom spend billions on influencing others to their way of thinking.

As mentioned in the Preface to this book, one hundred and fifty years of mission into the developing world has not brought about economic blessing. Poverty of an extreme kind reigns in Africa, parts of South America and the Asian subcontinent. Individuals in the Chinese house churches are not all that well off either! I have known many African pastors who have been taught in evangelical Bible Schools to preach tithing and live off the proceeds. It just does not work for them. The people have nothing and a tithe of nothing is nothing. Why should people give the little they have to someone who does not work in the field to grow food to feed their family? Failing to find support from tithing, African pastors resort to other strategies. An important one is to keep the names and addresses of every person from the West with whom you come into contact. When you need something – school fees for your children, a motor bike for 'the ministry' or a Bible - you send out letters to all of the people on your list of potential donors. If you are fortunate, some caring person will make the necessary donation. If you are extremely fortunate, several people will contribute to the same need. This is seen as a blessing from the Lord indeed!

Another Christian view is that poverty is the norm for the spiritual man. 'Do not be surprised, brethren, in this world we shall experience tribulation. It is the next world that holds your reward'. Well, there may be some truth in this view, if we hold to rapture theology – the great escape! But my Bible does not read that way. Rather, I find that the third

heaven is only a staging post, a place where we wait for God to complete his purposes in this present dispensation. For the promise is a new heaven and new earth in which dwells righteousness, once we have organised it so that everything on planet Earth has been put under Jesus' feet. Is that too radical?

Towards a Better Financial System

The above scenarios represent the range of financial strategies currently being practised by the Church of Jesus Christ around the world. Is this the best that we can do? When it comes to finding people who are generally successful in life, we discover that there is nobody more successful in all aspects of life than the Jews. While working with some Jewish colleagues in Johannesburg I had the opportunity to ask some of them: 'Why are you Jews so successful?' The answer I received was surprising to a Gentile like me: 'We Jews are successful because of the Uncle Ezra principle' they said.

When young Jews wish to start a business they do not borrow money from a bank. Rather, they put their proposition to Uncle Ezra because they know that in their culture he is duty bound to help them. Once the business is up and running, it will not be surprising if Uncle Ezra drops in occasionally to see how his investment is going, but this is welcome because Uncle Ezra is an experienced business person and can give you sound advice. With no interest to pay and no loan to repay on start-up capital, and expert business advice on hand, it is not surprising that more Jewish businesses survive than the average. But, should the first business fail, budding Jewish entrepreneurs are able to return to Uncle Ezra a second and even a third time before Uncle Ezra is entitled to excuse himself from further unfruitful loans. This, then, according to my Jewish friends is the reason that Jewish businesses do so well.

This explanation reminded me of something that happened when the Lord first called my wife and me to work in Africa. Our household had lived

comfortably during the previous twenty years but we had a mortgage on our house instead of money in the bank. Part of our preparation for Africa was to sell our house and this resulted in us having a relatively large amount of cash in our hand for the first time in our lives. I said to the Lord: ‘What do we do with this money’. He said: ‘I will show you’. The next day we were at the airport and met a young couple who were setting up a drop-in centre for young people in need. They were selling their house to pay for the property where the drop-in centre was planned but had failed by \$5000 to bring the deal together. The Lord whispered to me: ‘Here is a need you can meet’. So, I said to the couple: ‘We can lend you \$5000 at no interest if you will agree to pay it back as soon as you are able’. They were ecstatically happy with this suggestion. That evening I found myself talking to another Christian who was setting up a community house for disadvantaged families. He needed \$6000 to complete the transaction and again we were able to advance the funds needed. In short, over one week we loaned \$30 000 to six of my Christian brethren without interest on condition that they paid back the principal as soon as practicable. We were away in Africa for three years. Our family lived well over that time. For two of those years I worked for the Malawi Government who supplied our return air fares, a furnished house and a salary from which we were able to feed ourselves and put money into our ministry. When I arrived back in Australia, the money loaned was back in the bank and six families were now *debt free*. At last I was beginning to understand what is reported in Acts 2 and 4 about having all things in common. With God’s wisdom we were able to meet the needs of our brethren and the result was that the community of the redeemed, like the Jewish community, became a more powerful economic force. I am not saying that this is the beginning and end of God’s Kingdom economic strategies but it works for the Jews and seems to me not a bad place for believers to begin.

SEASONS

As mentioned above, in our Blackwood years (1981-7), once we had the

ecclesiastical structure right and helped the saints to an intimate relation with the Lord, we found ourselves moved by the Holy Spirit to prayer by courses. But prayer we found was not a year round occupation. Rather, we discovered that we were led to practice alternatively definite seasons of prayer and action. This was not something that we set up deliberately, from reading books about the latest way to grow the church or applying Biblical principle legalistically. We were led into this pattern by the Holy Spirit Himself and only afterwards found the Biblical explanation.

In particular, we found ourselves being led to participate in prayer ‘battles’ in the period March-July and action in the season September-February. This we found agreed with the Feasts of Israel as outlined in Leviticus, Chapter 23. Looking a bit further we found that the Jews had two New Year celebrations, one at the beginning of the first month (Nisan - which in the Julian Calendar begins in mid-March) and the other, the Feast of Trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri – mid-September). We found, further, that the Jews call the first six lunar months of the Jewish Calendar the Year of the Priests, and the second six lunar months the Year of the Kings. These times fitted perfectly with our experience as ordered by the Lord.

Now it is clear that Paul wanted nothing of the old covenant – even the Feasts (Gal.4:9-11) but in another place he affirms that we know what God is doing because He delights to communicate with us His intentions and actions (I Thess.5:1-11). In relation to the Feasts then, it is my practice to avoid slavish legalism and listen only to the *Logos*. There is a thin line here between genuine Christian practice and setting up religious protocols. Thankfully I find myself operating on the right side of this line. I do not keep a look out for the new moon in order to set up Festival of the Moon ordinances in the primal manner; I only notice the new moon when the Lord brings it to my attention. It is important that we be led by the Spirit, not set up memorials to past experiences.

Since 1985 I have found myself, along with the brethren with whom I am

currently fellowshipping, operating continually in God's seasonal program. From the Ides of March we experience 'spiritual prayer battles'. Of course, it is the Lord who is doing the battling; we are well protected as we remain under His covering. We feel the battle only because the Lord wishes to communicate to us what is happening; we are co-workers together with Him (I Cor.3:9). The shortest period of prayer of this kind that we experienced was that in 1986 when we ran the first prayer school (above). The longest was in 2008 – the prayer for Kangaroo Island – which went from March 15th to July 11th. During these times, despite our best efforts, we achieved nothing on the ground. The Lord had the agenda and the sovereign timing and we found that we could not move out of it. As I understand it, what is happening during the prayer period is that God is dealing with the demonic forces that have control of certain parts of the *cosmos*. Clearly this is a crucial strategy in bringing a certain part of the creation once again under God's control. For, 'how can one enter into a strongman's house and spoil his goods unless we first bind the strong man' (Matt.:12:29, Mark 3:27)? If we want to be successful in this, we need to let the Lord lead because He is the only One who knows what to do and how it may be done.

It is our experience that August is a month of preparation for the coming Year of the Kings, the time when we may hope to operate constructively to further God's Kingdom. How important it is that we do not just pray but take action when the Lord opens the door! In 1989 I was teaching at the YWAM base in South Africa. Amongst the students were a group of farmers who had been led to pray and break bread on high points in their homeland of Zimbabwe. They reported extraordinary manifestations. On days when the sky was clear they would begin to climb a mountain only to find cloud developing around them as they climbed. Often, by the time they reached the top of the hill, they would find themselves in a full blown thunderstorm, but prayer and the declaration of Christ's victorious action on the cross by the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup would see the storm dissipate. So, for a time, the demons controlling the lives of many people of Zimbabwe were brought into subjection. BUT no further

action was taken and within a few years the demons came back sevenfold, as is evident in happenings in Zimbabwe today. The President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, openly declares himself to be in regular contact with demons. On gaining power in 1980 he named the general hospital in Harare after the chief pagan prophet of the area in recognition of the supernatural assistance he had received during the independence struggle. He also advised the general populace that if they voted against him in any election the witch doctors in the Nyanga Hills would tell him, and he would punish them severely! By that means he has remained in power for 35 years. What might have happened if the church had moved beyond binding the strongmen to ‘spoiling his goods’? Clearly God is sovereign in Zimbabwe but the case motivates me to think we need to press the battle on the ground when the opportunity presents itself. Having done the hard work in prayer, why not take the land?

CHAPTER 13

TAKING THE LAND

*“Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people...
every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon,
that I have given unto you”, Joshua 1:2-3.*

In this chapter I want to introduce the reader to some initial ideas as to how the land may be taken. That the land should be taken is justified by many scriptures, not the least being Jesus encouragement that we should pray ‘Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven’ (Matt.6:10). It might be argued that this statement references the new heaven and new earth (II Peter 3:13, Rev.21:1-8) if it was not for important statements in the New Testament that assure us that Christ’s return is dependent on all things being ‘put beneath His feet’ (I Cor.15:20-28, Eph.1:22, Heb.2:8), not only in the legal sense but in practice. If that is so, then there is work for the church to do (Eph.2:10).

One of the important notions in New Testament times is that Christ is sitting down with the Majesty on high, resting in His completed work. So how are all things to be made subject to him unless the church empowered by the Holy Spirit does the work? In Joshua’s time, the Captain of the Lord’s Host led Joshua to know that Israel was not alone, even if His support team was invisible (Joshua 5:13-15). But it was Israel that had to do the physical work and the church, similarly, is not excused. Rise up people of God!

THE BATTLE TOWER

It is not always appreciated that the land promised to Abraham was much larger than that taken by Joshua. It was David that finally extended Israel’s borders to the full extent of God’s promises under the Abrahamic

covenant. There is an interesting scripture that reveals David's land-taking strategy. When he entered foreign lands he built battle towers (garrisons) and all his enemies became his servants (II Sam.8:1-18). How did this work?

As we have indicated above, the household and the *ecclesia*, when constructed to God's pattern, are more than places of protection and convenience; they are structures where we take time to give attention to God's purposes. Of course, in our dispensation the walls and gates of the structure are spiritual rather than physical, human rather than bricks and mortar, but they are there nevertheless. Within the walls of the spiritual house we are secure against spiritual attack. This is the thrust of the scripture which tells us that 'the Name of the Lord is a strong and mighty tower; the righteous run into it and are saved'. For most people this is sufficient. They see their Christian walk as activity *within* the security of the garrison, failing to see that a battle tower also provides the opportunity to view the enemy's activities and develop a battle plan to take the land. In this sense the *ecclesia* is a garrison for the mighty men (I Chron.12), the place where we spend the first six months of the year giving attention to the Lord's instructions with regard to the battle at hand. During this period the Holy Spirit not only defines the next stage of the battle but also builds courage in His people. This provides the necessary impetus for the army of God to move out at Trumpets to bring the land in question into subjection. This is the rhythm that God's people experience when they are led by Him. It is not all warfare. It is rest and planning followed by action and victory. This is what the Feasts of Israel are all about; they are our guide, important indicators of where we are in relation to God's purposes.

It may interest those who do their arithmetic to note that seven out of each nineteen years the Jewish calendar has a thirteenth month – Adar II. This is necessary to bring the lunar months into line with the solar year. The result is that every two to three years we have an extra month to punch home Christ's authority on some part of His creation.

DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS

As indicated above, the land is presently not in God's hands; rather it is overshadowed by demonic influence exerted by Satan and his minions. But demons are not omnipresent; they are discrete and finite and must at any point of time be somewhere in particular. Satan himself, being cast down to the earth, has been variously located over time. In early church times he was located at Pergamum (Rev.2:13). In our time he is located at Varanasi (Benares) on the River Ganges in India, or he was the last time I talked to the Lord about it. I have heard reports that he is now located in Berlin but I have no evidence of this, whereas several people have confirmed the Varanasi location. Other major demons are likewise located in specific places. For instance, there is a strong suggestion that the Prince of Islam is located in Madagascar. This is not surprising seeing that demons are snivelling creatures desperately afraid of being discovered. They are *never* found hiding in the place where pagan human worshippers draw on their spiritual power. Who would have thought that the Prince of Islam would be in Madagascar, but this is plausible when we understand that Malays and Indonesians crossed the Indian Ocean in the 11th Century AD, apparently carrying the demon with them (Horn, 1927). From such hiding places the 'principalities and powers' order their forces against the saints. During the prayer months, the Lord reveals the enemy's identity and where he is located. This is important because how can we bind him if we do not know who or where he is?

There are important indicators that assist us in identifying the location and operation of the enemy. These relate to names and principles of operation dating back to the Babylonian times (see Potter 1993). In one area in South Australia in which we have been operating we were led to discover three significant spiritual sites: a Rainbow Serpent site, a woman (Jezebel) site and a Hidden One (Satanic) site. These together constitute the usual father-woman-son (Cush, Semiramis and Nimrod) pattern that is definitive of all Babylonian influence.

The indicators of these sites were: (1) we experienced the oppression associated with the demons when we entered their territory; (2) we noted the activity of *human* paganism (witchcraft) associated with them; and (3) confirmation was obtained by ‘breaking bread’ and ‘drinking the cup’ over each site, which is a certain way to ‘rouse the dragon’. At the ‘woman site’ one of my friends was lifted 30cm off the ground as we drank the cup over the demon’s hiding place!

At the Hidden One site, we were led to set up a praise meeting one night in 2003. During the worship I was instructed of the Lord to ‘call down the angels’. This I did quietly, just between the Lord and myself, because it seemed to be a strange thing to do! Within a few minutes some of the brethren reported seeing angels, so that was confirmation that I really had heard from the Lord. But greater confirmation came the next morning when we discovered that the power of the demon in that place was cancelled, that there was a noticeable change in the spiritual climate over the area that the demon had influenced. This released us to press into possessing the land by legitimate business methods against the opposition of those who had drawn strength from this demon. Surprisingly we were not successful in this and this drove us back to prayer. The Lord revealed that there was a power operating behind the throne and it was my privilege in February 2013 to cast this elemental demon off the planet! As I write the battle continues in other places but we are confident of victory because our power source reigns supreme in the third heaven.

THE LORD’S ARMY

The 12th Chapter of I Chronicles sets out the characteristics of God’s Mighty Men. The first thing we read (v.2) is that they were ambidextrous, i.e. able to use both hands in the battle. This speaks to me of balance. We need to be balanced in our walk otherwise we may miss God’s best. Consider Jesus’s statement in John 15:5: ‘Without Me you can do nothing’. That is a true statement but if it is all we know we are unlikely to enter the field and take the land! This statement needs to be balanced by

another scripture like: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (Phil.4:13). Being aware of both scriptures at the same time keeps us close to the Lord, encourages us that Goliath can be slain and keeps us from pride when something we do is successful.

The next thing we note is that the sons of Gad could fight with both shield and buckler (v.8). I take this to mean they were good at both defence and offence. In Chapter 14 I report some of my own experiences in learning to deal with the enemy's attacks. I have made many mistakes but each mistake has proved to be an indelible, crucial learning experience. With regard to attacking, I note that in Jehoshaphat's time Israel went to war with the singers in front (II Chron.20). Praise is our greatest weapon!

We note that the Gadites were men who knew how to keep rank (v.9ff): Ezer was the first, etc. We do not read that No.7, Eliel, came out one morning saying it was his turn to lead. Some people have had more experience in the battle than others. If you are a learner, keep rank because the battlefield is not a place for playing games. In Greek and Roman culture the head of the army was a life-time appointment. In the *ecclesia* we are all equal, but on the battlefield some people are 'more equal than others'. Keeping rank is a good idea if we want to see the victory.

David had misgivings about his brethren from Judah and Benjamin (v.17), but they soon set things right. We should not be in the battle if our hearts are not knit to the heart of Jesus. We note further that the Lord's anger was kindled against David when he wanted to count the under 20s in his army (I Chron.21:1-8). Young people are NOT to be exposed to the battle. If they are, leaders will suffer. In fact, Jesus said it would be better for them that 'a millstone was hung around their neck and they were dropped in the deepest part of the ocean' than to cause one little one to 'be offended' (Matt.18:6).

Of the other people who joined David we note that the sons of Issachar

had understanding of the times ‘to know what Israel should do’ (v.32). It is always good to have people in the team who understand what God is doing, when we should pray and when we should act. Of the rest we note that *all of them* were expert in war, could keep rank and were of a perfect heart to make David King. In the same way we come together under the Lord’s instruction to announce the reign of Jesus over His Creation. What a privilege!

HISTORIC BATTLES

In what follows I give a few examples of battles for the land that I have been involved in. You will have your own experiences. Let’s encourage each other; Jesus is worthy of every bit of the *cosmos* we can put back in His hands.

Mont de Dieu

In 1975 a young South African couple purchased a piece of land and dedicated it to the Lord’s service. (It has become our practice to do this by ceremoniously pouring oil on the land and declaring that the land is His). The property is on the top of a mountain; the views are outstanding. They called it *Mont de Dieu* – the Mountain of the Lord. Being part of a missionary endeavour, they made the land available for accommodating numerous missionaries coming to work in the area at that time. Our family was part of the growing establishment who enjoyed the remarkable hospitality of this young couple for a time. And what a time it was! Wonderful worship in the Tabernacle of David on Sundays and during the week working to build a printing press to carry the work of evangelism into the heart of Africa. After six months our family left the security and warmth of this remarkable fellowship and proceeded to Malawi to set up a Christian literature office on their behalf.

Our family had arrived in South Africa in January 1977, ready to move to Malawi immediately. I visited Malawi in February that year and found a

job available to me that exactly suited my experience. But the visa did not come through until late June. The long wait was inconvenient but in retrospect we see that it was important for us to spend this time in the battle tower and proceed to Malawi *in God's timing*. As it happened, it took two more months to get the literature ministry registered, so the work began in mid-September – the beginning of the Year of the Kings. We did not recognise the seasonal pattern at the time but in retrospect we are ever-grateful to know that God cared for us absolutely and caused us to move according to His agenda and not our own.

On the way to Malawi, the Lord spoke to me. Referencing Acts 19:10, He informed me that in the space of two years all the people of Central Africa would 'hear the Word of the Lord Jesus'. In two years exactly, we distributed over 3.5 million Bible tracts and had 117 000 decision slips returned. Three years later the University of Malawi, Religious Studies Department conducted a survey of village churches. They reported that our literature had been the main cause of churches in Central Africa holding to a genuine Christology. These were heady days of learning about Africa and being effective through sheer grace and obedience. What we did not know was that the community back in South Africa had imploded. In 1981 the young couple sold *Mont de Dieu* as a matter of economic necessity. The missionary community scattered and God's hill lay desolate.

In late 1987 my wife and I were preparing to return to South Africa. We had been asked to work at a mission training work located near *Mont de Dieu*. One Saturday morning, just before we left Australia, I stepped from my bed and found myself staring at typical African grass waving in the wind on the hilltop at *Mont de Dieu*. There were the familiar buildings where we had stayed ten years before. What did this mean?

Our time at the mission school ended after 17 months and as we prayed into our future the *Mont de Dieu* vision again came to mind. We visited the current owner of the property and asked if by any chance he wished to

sell it. He was astonished because just that morning he had spoken to a land agent about selling the land and here we were at his door! A price was agreed on and a settlement date set. Judy and I sold property in Australia and imported money to South Africa to complete the deal. Due to a bank error we lost 50 000 Rand on the exchange rate and a further 45 000 Rand because a German Bank made an extra-ordinary run on the South African Rand that evening, the only time they ever did so according to a banker friend of mine. (The enemy may be defeated but he is not a bad tactician!). Fortunately, we still had sufficient to settle the deal but as we were preparing to do so the owner rang me to say that he had changed his mind. To say the least we were surprised and disappointed. Notwithstanding, we formed an educational association and pressed into gaining registration for a training institute to be housed on *Mont de Dieu* when the Lord delivered it into our hands! (Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!) But gaining registration proved as big a battle as the actual possessing of the land. It took five years for the authorities to approve our application; and then they only did so because the government had changed and the few remaining Europeans in the bureaucracy were intent on making sure that as many 'white deals' as possible were in place before they lost their positions to affirmative action. So, in 1995 we were ready to conduct our business. But *Mont de Dieu* was still not in our hands.

At that time we met a Canadian missionary couple living close to *Mont de Dieu*. Like us they were looking for a property to conduct a missionary program. We assisted them to look for land because we had extensive knowledge of the area but we did not tell them about *Mont de Dieu*; that was OURS! At the time, nothing suitable seemed to be available. In 1998 Judy and I left South Africa and returned to Australia. In September of that year came the news from the Canadians: 'Eureka, we have found it'. You guessed it; they had found *Mont de Dieu*. It was again for sale and this time with serious intent. In short, the Canadians purchased the land and it was our joy to hand them the reins of the Mont de Dieu Association in 1999. Actually, I continued as chairman for two years after the land had

been purchased and continue to have the pleasure of being on the land occasionally, if only as a visitor. When we return to the property we are gladdened by what is being achieved by the Canadians and a widening group of supporters. We do not deserve it but we are always greeted as honoured guests. A little cottage is made available to us and for a brief time we enjoy the view from God's mountain. More importantly we rejoice that the land dedicated to God in 1975 is back in the hands of God's people, for there are demon strongholds in the surrounding area that have influence over a vast area from Eastern South Africa to northern Kenya. The battle to take the land continues but at least a significant Kingdom stronghold is established.

Why were the Canadians successful in taking the land when the Potters failed? It is easy to argue that it was all a matter of God's timing, and we do not discount the fact that our standing in the gap was important in breaking down the enemy. But I see our failure due to two other factors. Firstly, insufficient support: the land is not taken by an individual household. We had no assembly around us whereas the Canadians had a small but influential group who together raised the funds to purchase the property. Secondly, we were inexperienced in doing business with South Africans. I am not making too much of this, because we could have made the deal if the owner had not pulled out. But looking back I see that my experience as a public manager did not equip me for wrestling with the forces operating in the market place. The loss of funds due to a Bank error was a case in point, as was the long battle with the bureaucracy. We are wiser now from these experiences and are pressing on to take other land.

Blackwood

When we came home from Africa in late 1979, we were intending to return to Africa but the door was shut firmly in our faces. This left us wondering what to do, because I was no longer employed and we had no fellowship group around us. For twelve months we waited. In mid-March 1981 (timing), we were approached by a friend who suggested that we

meet together for prayer on Sunday mornings. I said, 'Let's meet for a month and see what happens'. At the end of one month there were nineteen people meeting with us. We had done nothing to attract these people, they just appeared. For the next six months we met in a house made available to us but it became apparent that we would soon be approached by the authorities to meet elsewhere, because the Local Council was paranoid about excessive vehicles blocking streets. So it was that we sought alternative accommodation and found a piece of land in a commercial area where a church building was a permitted development. When the proposition was put to the house group that we buy this land, a range of responses were evident. One brother said he would put up about 60% of the capital and Judy and I said we would put up the deposit from the balance of our funds from the sale of our house prior to going to Africa. That was sufficient to sign a contract as the vendor was prepared to provide vendor finance for the remainder of the funds, so we went ahead with the deal. Settlement was to be in ninety days.

Soon after the contract was signed, the brother who had promised 60% of the finance pulled out of the deal. This left us with only 20% of the funds needed and an unconditional contract to meet in three months! Over the next few weeks we received enormous encouragement from the Lord that, despite what appeared, everything was going well. One scripture given to us by the Holy Spirit was Exodus 36:4-6; this indicated that people would give more than enough for the work. So it was that we looked in our letter box many times with great expectation of finding bank cheques, only to reach settlement day with nothing in our hand. Needless to say, the vendor was not happy when we defaulted! He took our deposit and on-sold the property to a fast-food chain. Settlement date for them was January 12th, 1983.

In the meantime, I had been given an audio tape of a talk by Loren Cunningham, (leader of Youth with a Mission) called *The Death and Resurrection of a Vision*. This had arrived in the letter box of one of our young women without her ordering it. She felt strongly that it was for me.

When I listened to it I realised that I had heard the actual talk in 1975 at a Vision Ministry Conference in Melbourne. Cunningham's message was this: when God gives a vision it is bound to go through death and resurrection, because unless it does so we build the work according to our experience and not according to His plan. For, not only are we a people with unenlightened minds but if we bring about the vision with our own power the people around will see us and not the Lord. There are other things we could say but this is the essence of it. If God is working, the principle of the Cross is central to the whole operation – in direct opposition to the way humans do things. Was there ever a prophet in old Israel that could be viewed as successful? Isaiah was sawn asunder by Manasseh, and Jeremiah was put in a hole in the ground and dragged off to Egypt against his will. And what about Jesus, who never had much money, was abandoned by his own brethren and put to death by His own people? Human success has nothing to do with God's work. And those who are involved in it can expect to be seen as failures in this present world. This is not an excuse – it is doing what Jesus asked us to do, take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 14:25-27).

So it was that we were sold up and our last remaining funds confiscated in the Blackwood venture. Strangely enough, we felt extremely peaceful and had a sense of certainty that we would be staying in the house on the property that we had by this time occupied. The day before the fast-food chain was to settle, they went bankrupt. The vendor rang me very distressed. What were we to do now? I said, 'You lend us the money and we will service it until we can get a loan to pay you out'. This was agreed. And so it was that the People of the Way possessed the land and began to build a building to house a range of ministries aimed at bringing the Kingdom message to the peoples of the world.

THE DEATH & RESURRECTION OF A VISION

In the years following the Blackwood experience, we have been through the death and resurrection business a number of times, in both small and

large ventures. The steps in the process are:

1. **Excitement Phase:** According to Cunningham when God gives a vision the first thing that happens is that we get excited. And this is important, for if God gives a vision we need to be motivated to do something about it.
2. **Experimental Phase:** We need to take action if the vision is to go forward. The problem at this stage is that we can only act on our prior experience. God's purpose may be guessed at but His ways of doing things are sometimes obscure. Do not be put off by this thought; it is important to take action even if it is in your own strength.
3. **Explanation of the Cost Phase:** As the work proceeds something happens to stop the free flow of the work – like an owner reneging on the deal in South Africa or a major financial contributor dropping out of the picture at Blackwood. There is nothing that you can do about this, you are committed, things are out of your control; you are going with God for the ride! This is not what most of us enjoy! One commentator made the remark that the rim of the valley of the shadow of death (Ps. 23) is pockmarked with heel marks! True! But having been through it a few times and being confident of the One who is leading, we have learned to enjoy the death experience, knowing that joy lies beyond the cross (Heb.12:2). So far, we have not had to lay down our life physically; presumably the Lord still has work for us to do.
4. **The Cross:** Once you are in God's birth channel there is nothing that you can do to stop the death, try as you might. Even as you try, you know it is not going to happen. The world's agents do their best to destroy you and the observers see you as a failure. But you live in the secret place of the Most High (Ps.91:1) and enjoy an on-going intimacy with the Master even in the battle.

5. **The Exam Phase:** This is probably the most difficult phase for the active human agent – it is a time of waiting with ‘no light’. There is no way of knowing when the resurrection will come. It is a time of inactivity. Only God knows what is happening behind the scenes and only He knows the appropriate time for the vision to re-emerge.
6. **Executive Phase:** Following the resurrection, the way forward is clear and precise. The vision remains the same but the action shifts to what the Lord really intended, not what we might have thought He intended. As operatives, we are equipped to carry out the essential tasks and get the job done. We recognise that there is a supernatural support system operating behind the scenes. This is a precious time!
7. **Extensive Phase:** The Lord is always interested in *multiplying the ministry*. This is His end result – not some building or missionary project. When the Lord sets up the program it does not return to Him void. Praise God!

Now the different phases of the establishment of a vision fit nicely with the timing schedule of the Feasts, as described above. For instance, phases 3 & 4 are normally located in the Year of the Priests and phases 1-2 and 6-7 in the Year of the Kings. Phase 5 is the bridge. As James said it: ‘Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the age (Acts 15:18)’. Which reminds me – the principle of death and resurrection applies throughout the ages as well as in the short term for some vision that the Lord gives to you or me. What is remarkable about the cross is that when the world thinks it has you down and out you are actually rising in authority! Many Christians that I know are seeking spiritual power. What they do not always want to accept is that this only comes through going through the cross. “All authority is given unto me, both in heaven and in earth” - Jesus speaking, just prior to His ascension.

CHAPTER 14

ORDERING THE LAND

*“Let us go up at once to possess the land for
we are well able to overcome it” Caleb, Num.23:30*

It is one thing to take the land and another to possess it. Paul’s view is that one lays the foundation and another builds upon it (I Cor.3:10). This is my experience also. I seem to be a foundation layer and this means that I have more experience in pioneering than in managing assemblies over long periods. But, it has been my joy to assist the Lord to raise up the Tabernacle of David in South Africa, Malawi and Blackwood so I do have something to say about building something that will pass through the fire (I Cor.3:12-15). There is a great deal in scripture to guide us, although much of it is ‘hard to understand’ if it is not learned under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. For, while we can agree that the early church walked in God’s principles, apart from snippets of scripture in the Acts of the Apostles there is no established blueprint on how to build the believers as living stones into a holy habitation (I Peter 2:5). I am sure that God arranged this on purpose – so that we would follow the Holy Spirit rather than do it by numbers.

One of the passages of scripture that I find encouraging is the outline of the general administration of the land of Israel under King David. This is found in the First Book of the Chronicles. The description of the restored Kingdom under Nehemiah is also helpful. And, as indicated above, we can learn a lot from the pattern of government established under the Athenian *ecclesia* and the Roman *SPQR*. (Unfortunately, the record of participatory democracy under Shem is largely lost). But what I wish to concentrate on in this chapter is the last Chapters of the Book of Ezekiel, because I believe they provide unique insights into the Lord’s wishes for the ordering of His land.

THE LORD'S PORTION

In considering how to we might order the land, the first thing we note is that Ezekiel 45 speaks of the Prince's portion. How can we consider this in a New Covenant perspective? Certainly we need a place for the *ecclesia* to meet, but I think that this scripture is referring to something more than a local church building. When I was about to return to Australia from Africa in 1998 and was seeking the Lord as to how I could best serve him there, the Lord commanded me 'to address the foundations'. Not knowing what this meant exactly, I decided to hold a Wesleyan Hymn revival in the Adelaide Town Hall, because the bulk of the South Australian European settlers were Wesleyans. Seven hundred people came to the event; Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists and Pentecostals also enjoy Wesleyan hymns! What struck me most when we entered the Town Hall auditorium to plan the arrangements was that the Lord's presence *was already there!* This reinforced to me that in ordering the land we need to look forward to establishing God's government in the halls of power, to eliminate the false dichotomy between church and state! We cannot be said to have ordered the land when we settle for a situation in which the church co-exists with paganism. This is a major Western delusion. The opposition knows better and fights tooth and nail to control the places that matter – the legislature, the media and education.

South Australia is a unique settlement. The founding fathers came to Australia with definitive plans to establish a God-centred state. As a result we have historical foundations of importance. A friend of mine was travelling to work in a coastal resort town when the Lord commanded him to turn down a road called 'Tabernacle Road'. A little way down that road the Lord commanded him to stop and there to his left was a piece of vacant land and a sign stating that this was the site of the first Christian Tabernacle in the area. It was encouraging to find that the first minister in the area understood that the Lord desired a Tabernacle and not a Babylonian facility. But apart from that, at the time we did not know why the Lord brought this property to my friend's attention?

More recently, a friend of mine who oversees a strong ministering household was led by the Lord to purchase some land in the hills behind the city of Adelaide. As he pressed into this he discovered a lookout that had been set up in recognition of the first Lutheran minister to arrive in South Australia. (The Lutherans in South Australia were part of a group in Europe who suffered severe persecution in their homeland). It was from here that the Lutheran church spread to the Eastern States and northwards to Central Australia. Clearly, my friend had been led to another of the Lord's foundations.

These experiences left us with the understanding that the Lord does not work in a haphazard manner. Rather, He works in history to achieve His purposes. When first-term missionaries come to me for advice I tell them: 'When you get to your place of appointment the first thing to do is find out what the Lord has been doing in that place before you got there. After that, you should specifically seek Him for understanding what He requires you to build on the work of those who have gone before'. Not every missionary (*missio*, L.; *apostolos*, Gk) is required to start from scratch or to re-invent the wheel.

Coming back to the 'Lord's portion', it seems that in Australia these days the Lord wishes us to build on the foundations laid in the early days of Christian settlement. Like Jerusalem of old, these places are now in ruins and it is the task of modern saints to restore them (Is.58:12). Not just to their former glory, for the 'glory of the latter house shall be greater than the former!' (Haggai 2:9). The Ezekiel notion of the Lord's Portion speaks something of government. Jesus is the Head of the *ecclesia* and I am very happy that He should have a portion. Let's dedicate some land to Him!

In September 2001, the Lord spoke to a friend of mine that we needed to attend a Christian meeting to be held in the Great Hall of the National Parliament in Canberra. I was busy at the time so I suggested that he go and I would stay at home and pray! But the Lord woke me in the night and made it very clear that it was important for me to GO! On the way, I asked

the Lord what the meeting was about. He said: 'I am setting up my Kingdom over Australia'. When we arrived at the first meeting I met two intercessors that I knew coming out of the prayer room. I said to them: 'What is the Lord saying this morning'? They said: "He is saying that the Government is upon His shoulders'!! Confirmation! Something is happening in Australia. The meetings in Canberra were not particularly memorable but I was encouraged to meet around fifty other people who, like us, had been ordered to attend by sovereign invitation. We returned home feeling a new authority to take and order the land.

In relation to the Lord's portion, there is a curious instruction in the 46th Chapter of Ezekiel. Verses 8-10 dictates that the Prince is allowed to leave the sanctuary by the doorway that He came in by but the people are not to do so. Some years ago, I was led to consider the purchase of a large house near the City of Adelaide; a brother who was something of a prophet believed that the Lord wanted us to buy it. We entered by the back door and walked right through the building, inspecting everything as we went. We left by the front door but on reaching the street decided it would be good to have one more look through. Turning back to re-enter by the front gate we ran into an invisible barrier which we could not push through. I recalled the Ezekiel scripture. The only conclusion I could make is that I am not the Prince but, like Paul's friend Quartus (Rom.16:23), blessed to be numbered amongst the brethren!

GOD'S RIVER

Ezekiel 47 is very encouraging. It seems that in the event that we can get the Kingdom structure right God will pour out a blessing that we cannot contain. The Sea of Gennesaret (Galilee) and the Dead Sea provide a tangible illustration. Life will flow from the throne to the marshes and salt places and the creation itself shall be 'liberated from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God' (Rom.8:21). This is what happened to the early church according to the book of Acts. And in our time, George Otis reports a case in Central America where common

vegetables grew to enormous size once the people of God got into unity. As an agricultural scientist I am looking forward to seeing that.

There is much more that we could say but most of it would be only conjecture. Let's press on in obedience to the mind of the Holy Spirit for it is given to us in our day to bring the earth into subjection and lay it at the feet of Jesus. This is our high calling. It is a long way from the pathways of religion. Let's not be again tangled in the yoke of bondage and the traditions of men (Gal.5:1, Col.2:8).

STAND!

Morton (1941) brings an important emphasis. The hermits of Egypt did not go out into the desert to hide from the world. On the contrary, out there they were required to 'walk the ramparts of their soul twenty-four hours every day'. Let us be like minded, for the battle is not ours but God's. Of course, it takes time to learn that. My own battle training was as follows.

Freedom from Condemnation - Blessed Assurance

I was first filled with the Holy Spirit in April 1972. Soon after that I woke one Sunday morning to find the devil whispering in my ear. His message was that God had given up on me because I was useless. It was very real. I cried out to the Lord and was flooded with a great cry from within: 'I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU OR FORSAKE YOU'. That was encouraging!

From 1972 to 1975 I experienced ongoing periods of oppression. I asked a few brethren what they thought about it. The Pentecostals said I was 'not using my gift enough'; the Evangelicals said there was no reference to such an experience in the Bible; and my Liturgical Christian friends looked at me in a helpless sort of way but said that they would pray for me! That left me exactly no-where. The experience came and went but I

began to notice a pattern. When I went to work in the morning the oppression lifted sufficiently for me to get through the day but, immediately I left the office in the evening, down it would come. This suggested to me that the Lord was somehow involved in the experience and this turned my thoughts to what I might have done wrong to earn the Lord's displeasure! Each time the oppression came upon me I would cry out: 'Lord! What have I done wrong now?' No answer – just greater oppression! Finally, after one period of five continuous weeks 'in the pit' the Lord showed me myself in a vision hanging in space by a cotton thread over the very gates of hell! 'What are you going to do now John', said Jesus. 'Lord', I said, 'I am going to keep very still, otherwise that cotton thread is going to break. It is now very clear to me that if you do not save me I am dead meat'. Strangely, right there, hanging precariously in space, I entered the REST. Like Job, I realized that it was not a question of whether I had got it right or wrong but whether I was fully trusting in Jesus for my whole salvation! From that hour I began to so trust Him and the next time the oppression came I said, 'Lord, I am in your hands and am resting in the battle'. When I did this I found I was through that battle in less than two days! After a time I noted that the oppression most often started on a Friday with the resurrection on Sunday, and this brought me to understand that I, like Jesus, was being offered up for some GOOD PURPOSE.

Gaining Authority

Having entered into the rest with regard to my own salvation, my wife and I were led by the Lord to run a literature ministry in Central Africa from 1976 to 1979 and to lay a foundation for the Lord's work in Blackwood from 1980 to 1987 (as outlined above). The African years were years of peace, because we worked entirely under the Lord's covering. The Blackwood years were different; we experienced the battle on a daily basis and through it all we found a new authority over the enemy. It happened like this. One afternoon I visited a number of households and found many people going down with influenza. As I began to pray for

them I felt as though the Lord was stretching me out over the community as a covering. By the time I returned home I was feeling ‘flu symptoms myself. A brother called in and I asked him to pray for me. The Lord said to him, ‘John must bear this alone’. I spent the next eleven days on my back in bed with a tremendously sore throat. But, while suffering in the outer man, the inner man was soaring. I waited for the Lord’s deliverance from the sore throat but finally got up and went to the doctor. He prescribed an antibiotic and in a day or so I was in full health. Importantly, I came off that sick bed with full assurance that the devil was a no-account, pathetic and powerless rat-bag. I preached on this the next Sunday and the saints were encouraged.

Learning to Deal with Amorite Spirits

The next week I ran smack into a new kind of demonic horde. I had headed off to arrange for an engineer to do some planning work for a building we were constructing. On the way down my head came under attack from what felt like arrows. By the time I reached the outskirts of the City I did not know whether I was coming or going. I eventually arrived at the engineer’s office but returned home quite battered. What was this all about?

The next week I headed off to town to renew my comprehensive car insurance. Money being short, on the way I found myself wondering whether it would be sufficient to hold a cheaper third-party property insurance policy. Once again my head began to spin. I made it to the insurance office and renewed the full comprehensive cover but by the time I arrived home I was in a spiritual pit. I hardly slept that night because my mind was working overtime to discover what this was about. In the morning I decided to reduce the insurance to third-party property. I rang the company and asked them to make the alteration. ‘No problems’, the girl said. But this maneuver did not seem to help for in a few hours I was further down the pit than before. Maybe the Lord wanted me to trust Him and have no insurance? The next day I rang the company and

cancelled the insurance. ‘No problems’, the girl said, but this left me absolutely in the extreme bottom of the pit! After a few hours I rang the girl back and told her to leave it at third-party. (You guessed it: ‘No problems’). The next morning I was feeling a little better but certainly not out of it. So I rang the insurance company and re-confirmed the comprehensive policy. In a few hours I was heading for normalcy and clean air! What was this all about? ‘Welcome to the world of the persuasive voices’, said the Lord.

A few days later a brother shared with me his revelation that the spirits over our education and political systems are the spirits of the Amorite Kings against whom Joshua fought all day and the sun stood still (Joshua 10). It was these gentlemen that I was now privileged to ‘know’!

Standing Against the Persuasive Voices

On the 26th December 1986, the Lord called my wife and me and a young woman living with us to pray. The word came: ‘I want John and Judy to stand against the persuasive voices over South Africa’. On the 5th of January we heard a radio report from South Africa in which President Pieter Botha announced that he was calling a general election because he ‘must have a mandate against the persuasive voices’. (These were his exact words!) We began to prepare for the trip to South Africa and extraordinary things began to happen. For instance, I posted off our passports to Canberra for visas and they were back in my letterbox in less than 24 hours! How could that happen?

For twelve days everything went smoothly, then the battle started; every night for 50 days we were required to stand ‘on the ramparts of our souls’. On the first night the devil said: ‘Did God say go to Africa?’ (that is an old one - Genesis 3:1). On the second night I woke with symptoms of a heart attack. I knew what to do with that – you lift your arms into the air and say: ‘Here I am Lord, take me home’. Immediately the symptoms disappeared. And so it continued until the day we left for South Africa.

Our month long trip was relatively uneventful apart from the fact that it was confirmed that the Lord was calling us to South Africa for a season. The South African election was held in May of 1987. The National Party won with a landslide. More particularly, the National Party which had been extremely right wing now found itself 'in the middle'. (Who-ever heard of an 'in the middle' party?). In December 1987, Judy, Elizabeth (our daughter) and I returned to South Africa for an extended stay – to stand against 'the persuasive voices'. This involved us in two important adventures.

OFFERING GOD'S STRATEGY TO SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHES

Between 1988 and 1994, Judy and I were led to fellowship in three church communities, all of which were groups that had split away from the Assemblies of God in South Africa. The first was a Pentecostal assembly of which Judy and I were foundational members in 1977 when we were first in South Africa. The second was a more comprehensive group that included the School of Missions at which we ministered for a season. The third and last was a church in Johannesburg where I had been asked to set up a secondary school. To a man the leadership in these fellowships rejected us. More importantly, they rejected what God wanted to say through us. Today, each of these works is 'small and feeble' because like the Moabites they would not be 'poured off their lees' (Is.16:14).

The day I left the Johannesburg church a young man came to my house unannounced. He shared with me the story of Irish missionaries Jimmy and Mary Mullins. He was able to do this because he was their grandson. How kind of the Lord to bring someone all the way from East London (1140 km) to give me understanding of what had been happening to my wife and me over the previous seven years! It seemed that the Pentecostal work in Southern Africa had been greatly influenced by Jimmy and Mary Mullins who had a great heart for unity and had persuaded several Pentecostal missionary groups to combine forces under the Assemblies of

God banner. As they grew older they passed the work over to three younger men whom they judged to be faithful. But the work suffered violence when one of these men moved into adultery, another into money-making and the third into power-mongering ('the gold, the girls and the glory'). The adulterer resigned his position, the money man died and this left the power man in control of the movement. Jimmy Mullins died a disappointed man in late 1987, just three days before Judy and I and Liz arrived back in South Africa! The Lord wished to do a new thing and was intent on including all of His people in His plans. (God never bypasses His people). Sad to say, His plan was rejected by the English-speaking South African Pentecostal movement.

THE BATTLE OVER EDUCATION

Having been rejected by the churches, in 1993 we moved to Johannesburg to face the Amorite (persuasive voice) spirits over education in South Africa. We did this by becoming first a student and then a staff-member of the Education Faculty at the University of the Witwatersrand. The University staff was ambivalent towards me; I was a distinction student but an *uitlander* (outsider), and my Christian stance was an embarrassment to many of them. But in May 1997 I sat on the stage of the Great Hall in my academic regalia 'singing in the heights of Zion' while my students graduated. God had brought me through to a complete victory over the demonic hordes that work hard to control our minds through education.

When I returned to Australia I attempted to set up a distance-learning university that would benefit people who were sidelined by the existing tertiary arrangements. I had entered into an agency-agreement with the University of South Africa (UNISA), the first fully distance-delivery University in the world (1946) and in the period 2000-2006 worked hard to get registration to deliver UNISA degrees in Australia. I met with ferocious opposition from the authorities and finally had to lay down the project. Was this a cross? Can a resurrection be expected in some future

times? Only the Lord knows but I am encouraged to believe so, for the Lord's instruction and support was very real throughout the process.

AUTHORITY

It is crucial that we have authority if we wish to do damage to the kingdom of darkness but we need to remember that it is only Jesus who has the authority we need (Matt.28:18). Real authority comes through our association with Him, and the battle is won when we realize that it is being in the Lord, and the Lord being in us, that makes us more than conquerors. It is not because of what we can or might do but because of what He HAS DONE. We can know this intellectually and yet not know it when the time of trouble comes. These days, when I travel about, I am aware that the enemy of my soul flees before me. But I am not deceived into thinking that this is because of me. Rather I know that it is because of the One who indwells me. Because I am battle-trained, the enemy is no longer able to deceive me with lies and deceptions. I still experience the battle but I know who I am and from whence deliverance comes. I am aware that the Lord lets me feel the battle because He wants me to know what is going on in the heavens. I rest in the certain knowledge that the battle is His, and remain very grateful that I am His son.

CHAPTER 15

DEALING WITH THE SYNCRETISM

'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds', Paul (II Cor.10:4)

In this present world we Christians are bound to face opposition (Luke 17:1; John 16:33), in some case extreme opposition. In the last chapter I specifically focused on the spiritual battle but there is as well an ideological battle, and this sometimes leads to war and/or persecution. In fact, we could say that for the early church opposition and persecution were the norm, as it is for the underground church in China today. And taking persecution to be normative, we might say that to be effective God's people need to develop skills in economic and physical survival in difficult circumstances as well as be skillful in spiritual warfare. In the West, most of us are soft compared with the poor in the developing world; the poor can survive in circumstances in which we would not last a week (Yunus, 1999). The important thing to keep in mind is that the way forward is not by human ingenuity but by submitting to Christ and following the way of the cross. Jesus is our example: He 'learned obedience by the things He suffered' (Heb.5:8).

Paul affirms that the ideological battle is with false philosophies and traditions (Col.2:8). And the problem is more evident in 'good times' than bad. Persecution keeps us close to Jesus; freedom leads us into manifold temptations. I have already mentioned the problems that developed in Rome once the church became fashionable. And the brief reign of the Puritan forces under Cromwell (1599-1658) in the United Kingdom is another case in which the church fell back into human thinking once it gained secular power (Robinson, 1902). We can appreciate the Puritans; their doctrine of the Ordinary Life was a breath of fresh air. Their downfall came via their doctrine of 'controlling the damned'. Many of

them were dogmatists who sought to impose the reign of Christ (as interpreted by them) by force on England and her territories. Cromwell appealed to them many times to ‘think it possible you may be mistaken’ (Bryant, 1953). But his army piked several thousand Irishmen on the Wexford Bridge, a fact not forgotten by the Irish. Put human power in Christian hands and there is a fair chance that they will perform no better than the pagans – sometimes worse. And while talking about Cromwell it might be good to remind ourselves that he faced as much opposition from the churches as from the forces arraigned behind King Charles, for at that time the church was divided against itself as usual. The end of the matter is this: the Church militant will solve nothing by operating in principles of human domination, be they in a traditional, charismatic or legal-rational form (Parkin, 1982). Nor will it achieve anything by using physical force, human cunning or witchcraft. God has another strategy. It is vastly superior to anything humans could devise or think. It is called the Cross (Luke 14:27) or ‘Death & Resurrection of a vision’, as we have seen above.

LOOK UP!

Locked in as we are in our own little portion of the world, working out our salvation ‘in fear and trembling’ on a day-to-day basis, we are often guilty of failing to see the bigger picture. Louie Giglio (2005) produced a DVD message entitled ‘Indescribable’ that provided superb pictures of the universe. For most Christians this was a revelation because they had never had the opportunity to study the *cosmos*. Giglio’s message was simple – God is BIG, and vastly more powerful than we can comprehend. This is the first thing to keep in mind – God is BIG, the creation tells us so.

The second thing we need to know is that God remains in charge despite human rebellion and failure. Something of this comes over in the Book of Job. When God is absent, there is a great deal of debate based on human propositions. When God appears human discussion is silenced. On my part, I do not worry about absurd propositions like Climate Change for I

recall that God is in control of the weather. In the *ecclesia* in which I have been blessed to participate, if there is no rain we get before the Lord and ask why, for He promised Noah that seed-time and harvest shall not cease (Gen.8:22). Sometimes He says that He wants to bring rain – in which case we pray and rain comes. At other times He says nothing but we still pray – sometimes it rains and sometimes it does not. And this reminds us that God is sovereign and not our servant.

FRONTIERS

So God is big, and God is in control of the *cosmos*, but there is another dimension. God is also in control of human activity. This was shown to me in 1985 when without prior warning the Holy Spirit whispered to me ‘I will show you the frontiers’. What did that mean? Over the next few months, information came into my hands with regard to various ideologies that dominate people groups around the world. I began to see that ideological groups were not arranged spasmodically but in a precise pattern in which every human ideology is opposed by another, the boundary where they meet forming a frontier. By this means God holds the world in balance. In what follows, I describe a few frontiers that seem to me to be important in our time.

Hindus and Muslims

To develop the principle I will begin with a description of the one of the most distinct frontiers - that between Islam and Hinduism. By shading a blank map of the world in colours representing areas where these two belief systems hold sway we discover that wherever Hinduism exists, Islam is always there as well – surrounding the Hindus, chewing on them, making sure that this most virulent of apostate belief systems has no opportunity to spread its malignant nonsense amongst the nations. First of all, there are the frontiers surrounding the Hindus in India: India is surrounded by the impenetrable Himalayas to the north, the Indian Ocean to the south and major Muslim populations to the west and east - Pakistan

and Bangladesh. Over time, groups of Hindu believers have travelled to other parts of the world, mainly as indentured workers; as a result Hindus are now found in places like Fiji, East Africa, South Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia (Bali) and Guyana on the north coast of South America. Once again we find that there are Muslims there as well. The same applies with the recent migration of Indians to Europe, the USA and Australia. Sometimes the Hindu/Muslim frontiers are local – within villages. At other times they are national. Wherever they are, warfare is continuous, as the Jammu-Kashmir dispute demonstrates. And war will continue, as it *is God's way of holding these powers under His control*.

Hindus and Pagans

Hindus face another frontier, that between themselves and primal forces. This is so in Guyana where the descendants of African slaves constitute 50% of the population as compared with 33% Hindus and 10% Muslims. It also occurs in Fiji where the Hindu community is under constant opposition from indigenous Fijians. In South Africa the Zulus have adopted the extraordinary strategy of coming into Durban once every twenty years or so (1947, 1989) to spend a day killing Hindus for no apparent reason!

Further Muslim Frontiers

Apart from the Muslim frontier with the Hindus, we find that there are established frontiers whenever Muslims come into contact with non-Muslim populations. In Europe there is a frontier between Muslim and Christians. Historically Islam hoped to take over Europe and, while it was frustrated in this, the frontier remains between Serbia and Croatia and within Cyprus. There is also a frontier to the east between Turkey and Christian Armenia, and there used to be one in Spain prior to the Muslims being pushed back across the Mediterranean. History reports that these frontier positions were not established lightly, and to the human mind it is surprising that a small band of Knights of St John in Rhodes and later

Malta were sufficiently strong to repulse the Muslim advance into Europe. This seems to be another case of ‘not by might, or by power but by My Spirit says the Lord’.

In the most populated Islamic nation, Indonesia, Muslims face several frontiers. There is one between Muslims and paganism, another between Muslims and the old Dutch mission churches, and a developing frontier with fresh Christian and Governmental involvements originating from Australia focused on education, aid and indigenous church planting.

The Jewish/Palestinian Frontier

It is sad to think that one man could sire two sons and their progeny become mortal enemies. Ishmael is built into the very fabric of Islamic folklore (the White Stone in the Kaaba, etc.) and Isaac is the son of promise whose son Jacob became Israel. To this very day Jacob and Ishmael are at war whenever and wherever they meet. Modern Israel was founded by Zionists with support from the British Government and the League of Nations. The Zionist objective is to rule the world. Thankfully, they are opposed by the Philistines in our time along a frontier marked by Arab intransigence and Israeli determination; otherwise there is no saying where their ambition might lead them.

Muslims Divided Amongst Themselves – an Internal Frontier

When the Lord showed me the Hindu/Muslim frontier, I noticed that the Muslim nations divide the world – from Morocco through Asia Minor to Indonesia. Clearly this has not happened by chance. I said to the Lord: ‘I see that you use the Muslims to control the Hindu Apostasy but how do you control the Muslims?’ ‘Easy’, He said ‘They always implode when they get too much power’. I remembered that in 1979, Time Magazine was talking about ‘militant Islam’ which at that time was pushing into Africa and Europe. The world wondered where it would all lead. Six months later we knew. The Sunnis in Iraq attacked the Shiites in Iran and

started a ten-year war that saw a million people dead and was only stopped when the West entered the fray in 1990. Islam is fatally divided amongst itself. Current activity in Iraq and Syria confirms it. It happened immediately after Mohammed's death; the followers of Ali splitting away from the main bunch.

This brings us back to the important understanding that while frontiers may have a geographical component, they are essentially *ideological*, boundaries between belief systems, frontiers in the human mind. Like Augustine, we once again stand amazed at the power of an idea to control human thoughts and actions.

CHRISTIAN FRONTIERS & SYNCRETISM

Having looked at a few of the more obvious frontiers in our time we may now turn to consider some important frontiers confronting Christianity. Along with other faiths, Christianity has frontiers with other ideologies and, critically, within itself, the latter being the result of syncretism, i.e. the holding of a mix of Christian and non-Christian notions. Regrettably the latter is almost ubiquitous and a serious hindrance to 'church' life and practice.

The Pagan/Christian Frontier

In Part I of this book, we have spoken at length about the primal belief system and noted that such societies hold a mix of God-given concepts (as revealed to the Patriarchs of human existence after the Flood) and entrenched paganism (derived from common-sense thinking and the Great Apostasy). This reality is difficult to detect in modern primal groups because their culture has been overlaid with a veneer of Western thought, Western economics and Catholic and Evangelical Christian practices, thanks to European expansion in the recent past (Pakenham, 1991). What we may fail to notice is that wherever Christian missionaries have contacted pagan groups frontiers are formed and there are few places if

any where these frontiers have been broken down to produce genuine Christian societies, even in the Christian West! China is unique. Communism has removed all Western influence and a genuine Christian movement has emerged.

What Western missionaries often fail to understand is that their own culture contains ingredients that are not from Christ. These harken back to the time when the Gospel came to our European ancestors. John Green (1884) has provided an account of the pagan/Christian frontier as it developed in England in the time of King Egbert in the late 8th Century AD. He makes the point that the impact of the outward trappings of Christianity (ecclesiastical organisation, bishops and priests, councils, language and law) had little influence on the lives of people brought up in the old pagan faith compared with the impact of the Christian value system (ideology). For this 'curtailed the powers of the freeman over his child, wife and slave by forbidding infanticide, putting away of wives and cruelty to serfs. It denied to the king his heritage of the blood of the gods, proclaimed slavery and war evil, met the feud face to face by denouncing revenge and held up gluttony and drunkenness, the essence of the old feasts, as sin'. It interfered with labour-customs by forbidding work on Sundays and holy days and 'imposed its own celebrations on the ceremonialism that the people had known for thousands of years'. Baptism succeeded the 'dragging through the earth for Hertha' and a new kin was created for child and parents in the 'gossip of the christening'. The old hand plighting and wed survived but the priest's blessing was added. The burial rite was completely altered - the burial fire was abolished and instead of resting beneath his mound on some windswept headland, 'the Christian warrior slept with his fellows in a lowly grave beneath the shade of the village church' (quotes from Green, op cit).

But, says Green, 'if the old faith was beaten, it was long in being killed'. A hundred years after the conversion of Kent, King Wihtaed had to forbid Kentish men offering to idols and at the close of the 8th Century AD the synods of Mercia and Northumbria were reported to be 'struggling against

the heathen practice of eating horse flesh at the feast to Woden'. The fight with Woden and Frigga was eventually won but 'the rude fetishism which dated back to ages long before history, had tougher and deeper roots'. In the end the church decided that the only option available to it was to 'baptise' pagan practices, turn exorcisms into benedictions, and charms into prayers. But they missed the Easter-fires, the May-day celebrations and the Midsummer fires with their numerous ceremonies – the rubbing of the sacred flame, the running through the embers and the round dance. At Christmas the entry of the boar's head decked with laurel and rosemary still recalls the sacrifice of the boar to Frigga at the mid-Winter feast. And the ploughman, as he takes his plough, still chants his prayer to Mother Earth: 'Earth, Earth, Mother Earth, grant thee the Almighty One, grant thee the Lord, acres waxing and sprouts wantoning'. And, as he drives the first furrow, 'Hail, Mother Earth, thou feeder of folk, be thou growing by goodness of God, filled with fodder, the folk to feed' (Green, op cit. p12).

So it was that within European Christendom, pagan principles survived and became indistinguishable from genuine Christian principles. Close inspection of *any* interaction between Christianity and the pagan world reveals the same principle always operates. But it is not always obvious. In the developing world converts are skilled at hiding these things from the simple missionary mind. *This is possible because the frontiers do not operate in the minds of missionaries; they operate in the minds and hearts of the 'converted' heathen!* In my experience, few missionaries understand this. They operate in a fanciful world that presumes that their converts are fully delivered from pagan practices by being baptised, dressed in 'Christian' clothes and having their name changed from Kamuzu to Jackson. Worse, as mentioned above, many missionaries fail to recognise that some of their own belief systems and ceremonies are actually apostate practices derived from the time when the church met their heathen ancestors. If we wish to discover how entrenched these frontiers remain in Western Christendom, try telling a Western Christian that Easter and Christmas are derived from heathen practice! In some cases it will be strenuously denied, in other cases it will be met by a

passive but determined resistance, despite the fact that it is well known that the folk-law associated with these festivals is not Christian in origin – Easter eggs, Christmas trees, etc.

In the early 1980s a community in Australia in which I was involved decided to put some of the hard sayings of Jesus into practice. One in particular caught our attention: ‘When you have a party, don’t invite your friends or your rich relatives and neighbours; they will only invite you back again and you will be recompensed by them... (rather) call the poor, maimed, lame and blind and you shall be blessed because they cannot repay you!’ (Luke 14: 12-14). We decided that, if Christmas was Jesus’s birthday party then we should do it His way – bless the poor and forget about our rich relatives. The first problem we ran into was that we could find no poor people in Australia thanks to Government social security arrangements. So, we decided to send our gifts to Africa – providing bandages to a hospital that was wrapping people’s wounds in newspaper. We said to our relatives, we are not giving Christmas presents this year; if you wish to bless us, kindly provide some money for our bandage program. Some of them supported the bandage program but mostly we were met with sad faces. It was hard not to share with family and friends on Christmas Day, for even within our own psyche we found the frontier operating. Obedience to the wishes of Jesus had led us to an uncomfortable place, *outside the camp* (Hebrews 13:13).

Not all missionaries were ignorant of the frontiers. Francis Xavier felt the best way to reach the heathen in India was to practice an ethno-graphic approach which penetrated the pagan/apostate world in order to influence it from within. He and his friends donned the saffron robe of the Buddhists and were to a large extent lost in a syncretic world of their own making. Catholic missionaries have always been prepared to ‘drink with the locals’, to the despair of the Presbyterians and Evangelicals who are in competition with them. On their part, the Evangelicals developed frontiers by precipitating Independent Churches, particularly in Africa where, in addition to seven thousand registered denominations, there are multiplied

thousands of unregistered village congregations that have formed spontaneously outside of involvements with Western missions.

The World's Independent (non-mission controlled) Churches are not small movements. The Kimbanquist Church boasts some 15 million baptised adult members and controls a whole region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. An experienced Swiss missionary saw them as a mission field. She arrived in the Congo to convert the Kimbanquists but after three months was baptised into their church! Large groups abound in West Africa: The Church of the Lord Aladura (4 million adult members), the Cherubim & Seraphim (6 million), O.O.Obu's Society of the Cross & Star (5 million), etc. Anybody who has seen the Cherubim & Seraphim coming down the street dressed in white robes and waving palm leaves knows that they are a force to be reckoned with! In East Africa there is an African Orthodox Church boasting 4 million adult members and in South Africa there is the Zionist Church with 6 million adult members. It was my privilege to observe the Zionist's Easter Camp at Pietersburg in Northern South Africa and watch as over 1 million people milled around in a paddock for several days.

I came into contact and worked with many independent churches in Central Africa in the late 1970s. One of the largest was the Apostles of Johannes Maranka who dress in white robes, shave their heads and carry shepherds crooks; they are mostly seen preaching at bus spots and other places where people gather. Then there is the Providence Industrial Mission headed up by my original African link man, Macford Chipuliko; he oversees more than 900 congregations in four countries. Some of these independent church groups started because of missionary legalism. Being unable or unwilling to conform to missionary rules, people broke away to form their own churches. Some of the reasons were trivial. Tobacco smoking is frowned upon in some church circles – some people could not quit the habit so they formed 'smoking (Fodya) churches'!

It is a feature of independent church denominations that all of them have

rules. When I was first in Malawi, I was led quite super-naturally to work with a group of churches near Mount Mulanje. The leaders were encouraged when I appeared and duly appointed me their missionary, which is a subtle way of saying ‘the supplier of stipends for church leaders!’ Despite my protests at being rushed into this high office I was asked to state my rules. Hedging, I asked them what their rules were. Without hesitation they replied: ‘no drinking, no smoking and no going to dances’. (The dances referred to were not the bush dances as we know them in Australia, but all-out orgies, with drums, under demonic influence). On further investigation, I discovered that these rules are ubiquitous not only across Africa but around the world wherever independent churches have manifested.

A major motivation for the development of independent churches was the world-wide influenza epidemic in 1918. Faced with death all around them, some church leaders decided to take neither traditional nor Western medicine, to trust God for immunity from the ‘flu. When they survived they took this to be a sign that God wanted them to found His ‘true church’ and their testimony drew many people to join them. This happened in Africa, amongst the American Indians and amongst the New Zealand Maoris – the large indigenous Ratma Church in New Zealand is a prime example. Johannes Maranka, on the other hand, like many other African prophets, simply heard a voice saying: ‘Johannes you are my true servant, go forth and found my true church’. Ten years later he had three million adherents!

All of these independent churches are syncretic, holding to some Christian positions and a mix of Old Testament and traditional beliefs. This is in contrast to the mission-based churches where the rules are defined by the West and traditional practices are skilfully hidden from missionary eyes. The Nigerian Church of the Lord Aladura has a prayer practice that requires the devotee to crawl across a space of sacred land towards a cross. Such practices are frowned upon by Evangelicals but when the Prophet John Doe set up his Society of the White Cross healing centre in

Ghana, thousands flocked to it and found miraculous deliverance from diseases of every kind. Much of the benefit was attributed, and still is today, to water from the Jordan River flown in weekly by a grateful Israeli Government because the Prophet John Doe foresaw the Six-day War and gave Israel warning of it!

Syncretic Hebraist practices abound. Johannes Maranke's prophets practice Passover by dwelling in Tabernacles (!) for a time each year. An important task at such meetings is for the older women to examine the maidens to see if they are virgins. Virgins are allowed to remain virgins but those who show evident signs of sexual intercourse are placed as wives in the households of church elders. On last count, Johannes Maranke had sixteen wives, most of whom he had accumulated via this apostate Passover practice!

Mission churches are generally intolerant of independent movements. 'Those people should come back to where they belong' they say. But a closer look suggests that the Age of Schism was not started by the primal groups but by the West following the Reformation. It came to Africa ready-made, in the form of missionaries representing a church divided. Having worked with the independent churches for some thirty years I am keen to hear what they have to say, because *they work with the frontier very directly* and tend to be much more constructive in responding to it than their mission counterparts, in my opinion.

In 1979, a missionary friend of mine, G.B Shelburne III from South Houston USA, sought out the leader of the Abraham Church in Malawi, a church classified by many missionaries as 'lustful' because it allowed people to have two wives. Upon arrival at the leader's village he was met by a man who told him that the leader was dying. My friend noticed a bed set up between the huts with a canopy over it to keep off the sun. The man on the bed raised himself and beckoned to my friend to come over. This was the leader of the Abraham Church. He took my friend's hand and said: 'How good and pleasant a thing it is when the brethren dwell

together in unity, it is like the oil running down Aaron's beard, like the Dew on Mount Herman, for there the Lord has declared blessing for ever more' (Psalm 133)! My friend questioned the old man on matters of belief and practice. With regard to wives, the old man said: 'If a man with two wives becomes a Christian, we allow him to keep them both, for where else would they go? But a man who is not married prior to joining the church is encouraged to take only one wife'. This practice seems better than the general missionary view that Christians must put away all wives but one – for I have met second and third wives who have been put away and found that their only recourse for survival is prostitution and/or making and selling home-brew beer. We may not agree with everything they are doing but the Christian/primal tradition frontier has more chance of resolution amongst the people who face it than by imposition from well-meaning but naïve missionaries that fail to see their own weaknesses in this regard.

I have spoken about the Christian/pagan frontier at some length because it is of particular interest to those of us who see it as our task to advance the Kingdom of God in the developing world. Jesus did not command us to preach. He asked us to 'baptise and disciple the nations, *teaching them to observe all the things that I have commanded you*', Him working with us' (Matt. 28:19-20). That this is sometimes difficult is evident, for in the New Testament some 70% of the apostle's writings are directed at correcting old thinking and exhorting church members to better behaviour. And this leads me to back-track for a moment to remember how the Church has had to battle with its own inner frontiers since Constantine made Christianity the religion of Rome.

The Syncretic Church

We are well aware, presumably, that the Christian Church was birthed into a hostile environment - the Jews and the Romans both had reasons for rejecting it. The way of the cross could hardly be more explicit in the record provided in the Book of Acts. Most of the original apostles were

martyred, and the continuing saga of a church marching into hostile territory is recorded in countless snippets of information that come to us down the corridors of time. All of this changed at the commencement of the 4th Century AD; Constantine the Great saw a vision of the cross in the sky and adopted Christianity as the religion of Rome. The period of freedom that followed saw two important developments: the consolidation of Christian principles into Canon Law and the mixing of genuine Christianity with apostate practices. The former led to the development of the New Testament Scriptures. The latter saw developments that reinforce to us that, like the hermits of Egypt, the church can never afford to be off its guard.

In the 1st Century BC, Julius Caesar was Dictator of the Roman Army and in this role he did the world a service by ridding Central Europe of the Gauls (Celts) and their apostate priests, the Druids. At this time the seat of Satan was at Pergamum (Rev.2: 12-13) and the pagan priests drawing on Satan's power were at three sites: (1) Halstaat in modern Austria; (2) a site in the Italian Alps; and (3) a site in the hills above the Rhône Valley. Though Pergamum was a minute portion of the Asian Peninsula, it had never been conquered by Rome but when Julius returned to Rome a strange thing happened; Atilla III of Pergamum abdicated and presented Julius with his kingdom and the artefacts of the Pontifex Maximus. Why would Atilla hand over his kingdom without a fight? Being the seat of Satan we may suppose that there was a hidden agenda behind such an extraordinary gesture, and we would suppose correctly, for the Druidic priest craft operations in Europe now having being driven into the extremities of what is now the United Kingdom and Eire, it was time for Satan to move his seat! Julius was not interested in religion so he put the artefacts of the Pontifex Maximus into storage. There they lay until the time of Gratian (367AD) when someone found them and presented them to the Emperor. Seeing that they were essentially religious the Emperor gave them to the Bishop of Rome who, sad to say, accepted them and by so doing welcomed apostate principles into the Church of Jesus the Christ, where they remain until this day.

To set the record straight, I am not one of those who wish to criticise or denounce the Orthodox Church. On the contrary, I have found within it a better maintenance of the principles of Christ than in the Evangelical world, despite outward appearances. And further, I have found that when God moves in history he shares it with His whole Church, beginning with Orthodoxy. The Charismatic Movement of the 1960-70s is a case in point. It began with the Catholics at Notre Dame University (USA) and was a direct outcome of Vatican II under Pope John the 23rd. In recent times I have noticed that God was pleased to announce his move to possess what is His in Australia by bringing Pope Benedict to Sydney exactly in His timing (2008). The church is Christ's Body, whatever its imperfections, we should be careful to treat it with respect. If we can see evidence of apostate thought in the Church it is not our prerogative to be judgmental or to take the higher moral ground because we think we have a better interpretation of the scriptures or a Word from the *Logos* by the Spirit. Maybe the apostasy is better in the church, where it remains covered by the blood, than outside of it.

Now the history of Europe from the 3rd to 10th Centuries sees a steady advancement of Church life and practice along with the development of legal systems and more stable principles of government in Europe. But powerful forces were at play to determine who would control the affairs of men: the church (which could claim to know the mind of God) or the powerful ruler (who controlled the land and all that it provided)? The matter was resolved in AD 962 with the proclamation of the Holy Roman Empire and the ordination of the Frankish King, Otto the Great of Aachen, as Emperor by Pope John XII in Rome (Bryce, 1890). This set up a nice balance of power. While he was alive the Emperor was the most powerful person on earth but a new Emperor could not attain to his office except by 'kissing the Pope's stirrup' (op cit). For eight hundred years the church and the 'Christian' Empire walked hand in hand, only interrupted by the populace demand for an egalitarian world. In 1806 Francis II abdicated, and with the Emperor gone, the Church found itself without a protector. It tried to invent ways of maintaining its authority, e.g. by building up its

army, by revisiting the idea that Mary had been immaculately conceived, etc. None of these strategies worked and in 1870 the armies of Victor Emmanuel I under Garibaldi defeated the Pope's forces and confined the Pope to the Vatican. Thus were the defenders of the faith stripped of secular power and reduced to seeing their role limited to *distributing the sacraments* to a suffering world. This remained the common practice of the Church (if not entirely its view) until Vatican II when John 23rd broke the nexus by declaring that the church was supposed to be walking in the world sharing in society's pain, not living in orders in isolation from the world. Apparently the Lord liked this notion for following Vatican II the Holy Spirit broke into the Western Church in the USA, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and the UK (in that order) to prepare a people to TAKE THE LAND in our time.

In 1870, the year that Garibaldi defeated the Pope's armies, two more important ideologies emerged: (1) the Jewish Banking fraternity established Worldwide Zionism, a movement dedicated to the Jews taking control of the world, and (2) Karl Marx published *Das Kapital*, the treatise responsible for the rise of World Communism.

The Christian/Zionist Frontier

The Zionist position was made possible by the supreme control exercised over the world's banking position by the Rothschild family and a group deriving from the 17th Century AD who called themselves the *Illuminati*. All of this was a backlash against the worldwide persecution of Jews and their removal from their land after Titus destroyed the temple in 70AD. To justify their cause as 'God's will', the Zionists have gone to extraordinary lengths, not the least being to alter the Masoretic Old Testament Text to their own prescription. One important example is the scripture Amos 9:11-12. The King James translation of this verse tells us that God will 'raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down... that they (the Jews) may possess the remnant of the Edom and all the heathen'. This is interpreted by the Zionists to justify the claim that God

wants them to rule over the nations. But Acts 15:16-17, where the overseer James quotes the same Amos scripture, reads: 'That the residue of men may seek the Lord'. How did the change come about? This is explained in that James is quoting from the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) whereas the modern Old Testament is translated from a Masoretic Text that has been tampered with. It takes only a slight adjustment in the Hebrew to bring about the required result.

In the early 1900s the Zionists rose to extraordinary power. During the 1914-18 World War they owned the Bank of Frankfurt, the Bank of France, a Swiss Bank, the Bank of England and the Italian Central Bank. In 1917, the UK Prime Minister Alfred Balfour found himself presiding over an impoverished Great Britain and made a deal with the Rothschild who was the governor of the Bank of England at that time. In return for the money needed for Britain to win the war and get back on her feet, Rothschild was made a Baron and gained a commitment from Balfour that the British would hand the land of Palestine back to the Jews (The Balfour Declaration). This took longer than expected because other forces were at work to create yet a third Roman Empire (Reich). The Nazis knew that their ambitions could not be realised except by eliminating the Jews but in the end the Third Reich was defeated and Britain fulfilled its obligation by handing Palestine to the Jews in 1948.

It is of interest that the Rothschild family disappeared from view during the Second World War. Wherever they are, it is certain that they remain committed to pursuing the Zionist objective of taking over the land, for, unlike the naïve Christian community, they have a profound understanding of the importance of the land in God's economy. They will be unsuccessful in this because they fail to understand the crucial hold that Satanic forces have on the land. Further, they wish to possess the land for themselves whereas God's New Israel, the church, aims to bring it under the feet of Jesus - at least, some of us do. The Jews are our direct competitors: they have the power to manipulate the world money system; we work with the one who 'owns the cattle on a thousand hills'. They are

the most successful people group on Earth; the church is large but ineffective because it is focussed on a man-centred Gospel and human traditions rather than the principles of Christ. The Church will win, but only because God is committed to His project. His patience is remarkable in the face of the current ignorance and ineffectiveness of His people. If those of us who have had grace to see what God is doing, at least in part, did not have the revelation that the cross is the most powerful operating system in the universe, we might be excused for being somewhat discouraged at progress to date!

The Christian/Communist Frontier

Recent history is so much with us that it is unnecessary to recount the development of Communism in our time, except to say that the geographical boundaries of this frontier are an example of how a frontier may be well defined but move over time. Twenty years ago the Christian/Communist frontier ran through Germany and Italy but it was in Poland that the battle raged and it was the Catholic Church there that took the brunt of the battle. God raised up a remarkable Polish Pope to push back the tide of Soviet Communism that was threatening to overpower Europe. There were also French Catholics who took the problem seriously; Jean Ousset's monograph *Action* was aimed at reversing the influence of both Communism and Freemasonry. It is, as his editor A.S.Fraser remarks, a counter-revolutionary *vade mecum par excellence* and should be standard reading for all Christians wishing to make a difference in the world around us (Ousset, 2002). In Australia, it was the Catholics once again, through Archbishop Mannix and B.A.Santamaria, that stemmed the push by the communists into Australian politics. And it is the Catholics who in these times are nearly a lone voice in Australia standing up for conservative values – marriage and family, heterosexuality and opposition to euthanasia, contraception and abortion.

At its eastern end, Soviet Communism was contained by a frontier with the Chinese juggernaut, also Communist but sufficiently different in

flavour to prevent an alliance forming. We can be thankful for this because Russia and China together would have presented a difficult challenge indeed. In time the Soviet system broke down under economic pressures from within. The Chinese system is still in place, although it bears no resemblance to the revolutionary days immediately post World War II. The outcome of the ideological battle for China is still to be determined. From the outside, China appears to have given herself over to Western-style economic development. On the inside, there is a persecuted but vibrant Church giving itself unstintingly to the task of taking the Land for the Lord. By some estimates the Chinese church has reached at least one hundred million adult members. Of the one billion plus people who claim allegiance to Christ world-wide, the Chinese church is the most radical and the most militant. These days, they set the standard!

The Christian/Hindu Frontier

In the first century AD, St Thomas and St Bartholomew travelled to India and established a church there. They were followed by a group from Syria in the 3rd Century AD who set themselves up in the tip of the Indian subcontinent, the place now called Kerala. The church that developed survived in a liturgical and apostate form but in the 1900s the Holy Spirit came upon it in a powerful way. Many young men moved out of Kerala to bring the Gospel to the various ethnic groups that make up that nation of India. I am in contact with many of these church leaders. They impress me with their determination and commitment.

Friends of mine have recently been to Pakistan where they found the same kind of people – indigenous Christians with incredible zeal to promote the Gospel. I am encouraged. My ancestors came from England; they were Methodists and Bible Christians. In God's timing my wife and I met the Holy Spirit and our lives were turned upside down. We needed to see the larger picture. It is not all about us. It is God working in history. He brought His church to the antipodes for a later time. He has a plan and we have a part in that plan. Thank you Lord for giving us this opportunity!

A FINAL NOTE

I have often wondered why so many Christians are content to work in an instrumental world, go to church on Sundays but remain inactive in advancing the Kingdom of God. I have also wondered at churches that operate in a closed world of their own making, focus on making their churches more comfortable, install air conditioning and better sound systems and struggle to put 1% of their income into missions. I am not here to judge them – I am simply asking the question: is this what God expects of us?

Maybe the problem is that not many of us have made the Pentecostal Offering. Deuteronomy 16:9 instructs us to keep the Feast of Weeks (the Feast of Pentecost): ‘Seven weeks shall you number from First Fruits and you shall keep the feast with a tribute of a freewill offering of your own hand, which you shall give to the Lord *according to the measure that the Lord has blessed you*’. On a cold night in June 1976, my wife and I were drawn to seek the Lord. As we knelt to pray, I was led to open my Bible to Deuteronomy 16:9-11. At the same time I felt strongly that the Lord would speak to Judy directly. When I spoke this out Judy opened her eyes and was surprised to find me reading from the book of Deuteronomy because while we were praying the word DEUTERONOMY had appeared before her eyes in flames. We read the passage together and went to bed somewhat sober. For three days we thought about the matter independently before coming together to share our thoughts and feelings. We had both come to the same conclusion; if the Lord wished us to present an offering equivalent to what He had done for us then it was clear that we could hold nothing back. We got on our knees again and in a simple way offered the Lord our lives, our children and all of our possessions.

I am glad to report that God took what we offered. Since that time we have been through nearly four decades of learning experiences in Africa

and Australia. We have shifted house about 24 times and have had to trust the Lord for many things, not the least being the welfare of our children. I am glad and grateful to be able to say that our four children and our eleven grandchildren all know the Lord and those who are old enough are usefully employed in His Kingdom. The Lord has looked after us in sovereign ways. We have been able to maintain our normal moderate standard of living in good times and bad and He has showed us how to trust Him for the funds we need to promote His work.

The Pentecostal Offering is not often taught in churches in my experience. I am mentioning it here because it opened the door for my wife and I to enter into the Kingdom dimension and we have not been disappointed.

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INDEX

Battle Towers	182	Humanity	
Creation	3, 12	Agency	67
Culture	75	Development	110
Dating the Earth	7	Function	15
Death & Resurrection	192	Learning	47
Demons	184	Management	69
Ecclesia	120	Ontology	17
Athens	120	Psychology	33
Christian	131	Kingdom of God	
Officers	139	Agency	87
SPQR	129	Models	161
Evolution	5	Seasons	178
Frontiers	208	Taking Land	182
Christian	211	Positivism	20
Hindus	208	Prayer Schools	169
Muslims	208	Primal Life	17
Pagan	211	Psychology	34
God	2	Learning	47
Economics	174	Problem Census	71
Grace	45	Religion	
Kingdom of	89, 161	Manicheeism	41
Word of	106	Confession	43
Households	107	Scientism	50
Leadership	108	Spiritual Gifts	90
		Spiritual Protection	108
		Taking the Land	182
		Lord's Portion	196
		God's River	198