



GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP

By E.J. Newman

WORSHIP is defined in general terms by the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as “reverence or veneration paid to a being or power regarded as supernatural or divine; the action or practice of displaying this by appropriate acts, rites, or ceremonies”. The word thus carries with it two distinct ideas, that of man’s mental attitude of reverence for the divine power and that of the expression of such attitude in outward acts. Of these two elements the mental attitude must come first, being followed by its outward expression. In other words, worship is impossible without belief. Moreover, the nature of a man’s belief, the way in which he thinks about God, determines his acts of worship and is therefore of the utmost importance in shaping his way of life. Sir James Frazer expresses this truth very clearly when he writes: “...if the Deity is one who delights in charity and mercy and purity more than in oblations of blood, the chanting of hymns, and the fumes of incense, his worshippers will best please him, not by prostrating themselves before him, by intoning his praises, and by filling his temples with costly gifts, but by being pure and merciful and charitable towards men, for in so doing they will imitate, so far as human infirmity allows, the perfections of the divine nature.” (James Frazer ‘The Golden Bough’ ch.4)

This ethical aspect of worship is paramount in the Old and the New Testament. So God declares through Hosea, “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos. 6:6). And Micah testifies: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? ... He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic.6:6, 8). In the New Testament Paul compares men’s proper way of worshipping God to the offering of a living sacrifice (Rom.12:1), and James defines pure religion as this, “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”. Jas. 1:27. Ideals and conceptions such as these, by their influence on the outlook and lives of individual men and women, have profoundly affected the

development of western civilization. In recent years, however, this influence has been diminishing as various factors have shaken men's belief in God. In the 1920s Bishop Gore portrayed the world as "chaotic in the matter of religious beliefs" and described the prevailing note in men's minds as that of uncertainty and bewilderment. (Charles Gore 1853–1932 'Belief in God'. Ch.1). The position has not improved in the intervening years.

The factors which have shaken man's belief are not far to seek. The last three hundred years have seen a tremendous expansion in his knowledge of and control over the powers of the physical universe. This is essentially a scientific world in which the forces of nature have been harnessed to man's ends. This has been achieved; by an increased understanding of the regular and uniform behaviour of those forces as a result of which there has gradually been absorbed; the idea that every aspect of human experience is capable of explanation in the light of "the laws which govern the universe". Arnold Toynbee, describes the process in these words:

"In the systems in which 'Law is king of all' we can watch the personality of God growing fainter as the law that governs the universe comes into sharper, focus ... In our own day, when science is laying claim to the whole-; of the spiritual as well as the material universe, we see God the Mathematician fading right out into God the Vacuum." (Toynbee 1889-1975 'A Study of History' D.C. Somervell Abridgement of Vol. 1 to 6, pages 497-8)

It may seem somewhat paradoxical that man's increased understanding and; control of the forces of nature has not stimulated spiritual growth, but in fact, as the vastness of the universe unfolds before his eye, his stature diminishes. To this must be ascribed the somewhat; hopeless vein in which a young scientist recently concluded a series of broadcast talks: "Perhaps the most majestic feature of our whole existence is that while our intelligences are powerful enough to penetrate deeply into the evolution of this quite incredible universe, we still have not the smallest clue to our own fate." (Fred Hoyle 'The Nature of the Universe').

No scientific theory has been stronger in its influence than that of evolution, which has been destructive of belief in God in two ways. First it has sought to provide an account of the origin of life without the conception of creation by a supreme being, although by no means all those who accept the idea of evolution go this far.

Secondly, in trying to trace the development of man from an ape-like ancestry, the theory has tended to ridicule the ideas of sin and moral law and to ascribe them to religious and social taboos. A careful examination would show that the widespread acceptance of evolution as a satisfactory explanation of life is based, not on conviction by scientific demonstration, but on an act of faith. Indeed in an unguarded moment one eminent scientist let fall the reason which prompts many people to put their faith in evolution, when he said that the theory "must" be right because the alternative of special creation was "clearly incredible". (D.M.S. Watson in the August 10, 1929 issue of Nature p.231 - 234).).

More thoughtful minds will prefer the caution of T. H. Huxley, who, after giving his opinion that living protoplasm developed from non-living matter, wrote: "That is the expectation to which analogical reasoning leads me; but I beg you once more to recollect that I have no right to call my opinion anything but an act of philosophical faith." (cited in J.W.N. Sullivan, *The Limitations of Science*, Ch.4.)

The theory of evolution has not confined itself to the origin of life. It is found in many other fields, including those of history and literature where it has done great damage to faith in the Bible. Here the theory presents us with the view that belief in one God must be a development from belief in many and that belief in one God has itself gone through a long and tortuous process of growth. The exalted views of God expressed in the Bible must therefore be the work of a late editor and so the Biblical writings must be thought of as consisting of layer upon layer of gradually developing views about God. It was this kind of thesis which led to the bold, but now shown to be quite erroneous, assertions of the German critic Julius Wellhausen, (1844–1918) that the stories of the patriarchs are "historically impossible" and that, as "writing was unknown in the days of Moses", he could not have written the books ascribed to him. Happily more conservative influences are now at work amongst scholars, but amongst laymen too much damage has already been done to be quickly repaired.

The picture, then, is of man rapidly extending his control over the physical universe, but using that control to plan the destruction of his fellow men. And while evolution preaches the march of human progress, man is made more and more conscious that he is but some tiny, ephemeral speck in a vast process of development. It is hardly surprising that, faced with these paradoxes, most men close their minds to the issues of life. For the real alternative to belief in God is the thorough-going, desperate materialism of Bertrand Russell: "That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand." (J.W.N. Sullivan, *The Limitations of Science*, ch.4). What ground, then, is there for belief in God?

THE FACT OF REVELATION

There are various arguments by which men have been convinced of the existence of God. One of the oldest of these is what is commonly called the cosmological argument, which is that the visible universe is not self-explanatory but points beyond itself to some transcendent source: "The spacious firmament on high, With all the blue ethereal sky. And spangled heavens, a shining frame, Their great Original proclaim". (Joseph Addison 1672-1719,

lyricist of Haydn's Creation).

Others, impressed by the evidence of design in the universe, contend that this points to purpose behind it which must be the product of a supreme mind. Other arguments draw on human experience: man's consciousness of moral obligation which appears to distinguish him from other living creatures; the very idea of God entering into man's mind; the nature of religious experience. Such arguments, however, do not carry us very far. "We are bound", it has been well said in this connection, "to search for God with all the energy of our reason, and in a measure we find Him; but at the same time He baffles our search. It carries us a certain way, and then leaves us, disappointed and disheartened. We discover that God is, but not what He is. (Gore, 'Belief in God', Ch.3).

The Christian belief in God rests on no such philosophical arguments but on the conviction that God has revealed Himself. There is indeed a note of irony in Zophar's question to Job,

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11:7-8).

The altar which the Athenians erected "To the Unknown God" is an abiding memorial of man's inability, unaided and untutored, to find out God, and Paul's words to the Athenians, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you", are a permanent reminder that Christian belief in God is based on the fact that God has spoken. Throughout the New Testament the writers are at pains to emphasize this. John testifies, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:3) and Peter, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16).

It is the foundation of Christian belief in God that His revelation has come to us primarily through two unique events in history: first in the witness of God's people Israel, and secondly in the person of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. The revelation to Israel came through the law which was the basis of its national and spiritual life and through the prophets who in the name of the Lord recalled the backsliding people to an observance of the principles of the law which they were neglecting, while portraying also the outpouring of God's judgments upon those who would not walk in His ways. The relation of Jesus to this revelation is expressed in the letter to the Hebrews thus: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2).

These historic facts constituting God's revelation are recorded in the Bible. Thus the Bible is for us the word of God with a message of authority because it comes from God. Here is the assurance that God is and that He has spoken. This view of the Bible is sharply distinguished from that which sees in it only the record of what man has discovered about God. On that view the "Thus saith the Lord" of the prophets is not a word from God but merely a word

about God and therefore to be judged by the same criterion as in these days we should judge the views which any theologian or philosopher may express about God. It was on no such empirical basis as this that the gospel was preached, nor indeed could it thus have been sustained, but on the firmer ground that “no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21)

It is sometimes objected that this reliance upon revelation leaves no room for the use of our reasoning powers and that Christians are ignorant, credulous people who never use their minds. Nothing could be further from the truth because revelation and reason are not contradictory but complementary. In our search for God, where reason fails and “leaves us disappointed and disheartened”, revelation comes to our aid and always in terms which reason can understand, for an incomprehensible revelation is a denial in itself. Further it is not to be thought that the fact of revelation implies a neat and tidy answer to every problem. A limit is set to revelation by the limitations of man’s own mental capacity and there are many problems which continue to baffle: we do not know just how the word of the Lord was given through the prophets, nor can we hope for a full comprehension of all that is implied in the statement that in Jesus Christ there “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

We encompass what we can of these truths with our finite minds, remembering that belief and understanding are not ends in themselves but are designed to bring us to worship God, that so we may shape our lives.

THE OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION GOD THE CREATOR

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Gen.1:1). With these simple words the Bible begins and the first act of God of which we learn is that of creation. God, therefore, is the source and origin of all things, the prime mover and first cause. Because this is so the works of creation are spoken of as the handiwork of God which expresses His greatness. So Job is made conscious how puny he is by the challenge out of the whirlwind:

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations therefore fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof?” (Job 38:4-6).

This thought recurs over and over again in the Psalms, as in tilt familiar words,

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork”. (Psa. 19:1).

Philosophical arguments for the existence of God have often been based on the evidence of design and purpose in the universe. In comparatively recent times the argument has been restated by Paley through the medium of his well-known figure of the watch. (William Paley

‘A View of the Evidences of Christianity’ 1794). If anybody finds a watch or other complicated piece of machinery, Paley argues, he will examine it, see that it is designed and planned for a particular purpose and so will conclude that it was made by somebody. So, he says, when we consider the universe, we ascribe its design and plan to a creative mind.

In the context of the argument which he is using, Paley’s analogy of the watch is useful, but it must not be carried beyond the limits of the argument. As science extends our knowledge of the universe there is a tendency for us more and more to think of God creating it as a watchmaker may make a watch and then, having set it going, leaving it to run its course. We think of the universe as a complicated piece of machinery whose working we are gradually comprehending, so that the only serious gap in our knowledge is how it began. This gap we conveniently fill by invoking the thought of God and there, if we are not very careful, our thought about Him both begins and ends. This danger we shall only avoid if we are alive to the limitations of the analogy of the watchmaker.

The analogy breaks down in at least two important respects. In the first place a watchmaker assembles a watch by gathering together, shaping and fitting into place various pieces of already existing material. We describe this process by common consent as “making” a watch and do not often speak of it as “creating” a watch. In this we are quite right, because the watchmaker does not create his watch out of nothing but uses materials available to him. The creation of the heaven and the earth, however, was “in the beginning” and, although it is impossible to grasp the idea with our finite minds, we try to think of it as a creating and not as a making or reshaping out of existing material.

The second weakness of the analogy is perhaps the more important. A watchmaker may leave his watch but it will be unaffected by his absence and it will survive his death. Occasional attention in the way of oiling and rewinding are all that is needed for it to do what it was designed to do, and this attention can be given by somebody who could never have made this or any other watch. Such an analogy is quite inadequate to describe God’s relation with His universe for He is not only the creator but also the sustainer of all things, so that apart from Him life as we know it would cease. The Psalmist expresses this truth in these words:

“These wait all upon thee; That thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, And return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: And thou renewest the face of the earth.” (Psa.104:27-30).

Any idea of an ‘absentee God’, responsible only for the initial act of creation and nothing more, is therefore quite out of line with Bible teaching.

GOD THE LORD

To think of God as the creator and sustainer of all things is to think of Him as everlasting and

eternal, one who is, as it were, outside time and who abides while all else changes. This thought of the abiding nature of God colours much of the faith of the Old Testament writers who see the transient and ephemeral character of human experience against the vision of Him of whom it is written, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psa.90:2). Typical of this thought are the words of the Psalmist quoted in the letter to the Hebrews:

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: And the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, And thy years shall have no end.” (Psa.102:25-27 cited Heb.1:10-12).

Isaac Watts’ familiar hymn, “O God, our help in ages past”, paraphrases this conception of God.

In this assurance the Old Testament writers found quietness and confidence: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps.48:10). The thought, however, goes deeper than that of God as simply the everlasting creator and sustainer of all things. The words which follow this quotation show this:

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psa. 48:10)

Here is the assurance of the purpose of God to be glorified in the earth which throughout the Old and New Testament provides both the foundation of faith and the basis of the call to a sober, righteous and godly life. As Titus 2:12 where the exhortation is associated directly with our “blessed hope” which is “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”.

God is not only Alpha, the beginning, but also Omega, the end (Rev. 21:6). He is actively guiding all things to the end which He has appointed, the filling of the earth with His glory. For this Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the words of the Lord’s prayer: “Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10). This thought is not new in the teaching of Jesus but is deep-rooted in the pages of the Old Testament where there unfolds a view of history in which the hand of God is seen at work.

It is against this thought of a God who is active in history that we must understand the records of God’s dealing with his people Israel. Of them God declared through Isaiah: “Ye are my witnesses ... and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange God among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.” (Isa. 43:10-12). Israel were the witnesses of God’s existence and activity because their whole history is the story of His dealings with the nation

from the day when Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to be “the father of a great multitude” (Gen. 17:5) to the day when the people, stiff-necked and rebellious against their own God, were carried away as captives into strange lands. So in the Old Testament we have the record of the hand of God clearly seen in the history of His people, bringing the assurance that God is active to work out His purpose. In the light of this we read how God covenanted with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David that he would make of their descendants a great nation who would be the centre of His purpose with the whole earth: “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). In the memorial name of God revealed to Moses before he was called to bring Israel out of Egypt, “I will be that I will be” (Exod. 3:14 RV margin) there is the intimation of God’s coming into His own in creation. So God Himself declares to the people: “As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21). The expectation of the day when God would glorify His name in the earth and “cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” (Isa. 61:11) permeates the message of the prophets, and, even when the people of God are scattered amongst the nations, they can be comforted in the contemplation of that time when God will perform the covenants made with the fathers and “Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isa. 27:6).

THE GLORY OF GOD

The revelation of God as creator and sustainer of all things, as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, emphasizes His power and greatness. The Psalmist again brings this out in words of praise:

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; And his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, And shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, And of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: And I will declare thy greatness.” (Psa. 145:3-6).

It is on the basis of this that the Bible speaks of God in terms of kingship and rulership leading to the thought of His glory:

“The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, And burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world; The earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare his righteousness, And all the people see his glory.” (Psa. 97:1-6).

These words have been quoted at length from Psalm 97 because they may help us to make an important transition in our thought while we consider what we mean by the glory of God. The Psalmist associates the glory of God with physical manifestations, cloud and darkness, fire and lightning. This is typical of the thought of the Old Testament. In the wilderness God

went before the people to lead them by day in a pillar of cloud and to give them light by night in a pillar of fire (Exod.18). When the law was given to Israel through Moses we read that

“the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel”. (Exod. 24:16-17).

Later it is recorded that, when Moses came down from the mount the second time, his face shone and he veiled it from the people.” (Exod. 34:29-35; cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-4:6). In the tabernacle there was the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat where God appeared in the cloud (Lev. 16:2; see Exod.25:22 and 40:34, 35). In the temple, after the ark was brought in, “the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.” (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 7:1-3). In Psalm 18 there is a magnificent picture of the manifestation of God’s glory in storm. (Psa.18:7-15).

To Ezekiel the glory of the Lord appears as the likeness of a rainbow (Ezek. 1:28) and with the noise of a great rushing (Ezek. 3:12-13). Finally Isaiah, recalling that one of the first acts of God was to divide light from darkness, pictures Jerusalem as the centre from which God’s glory will shine forth to the nations: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” (Isa. 60:1-3)

These are but a few examples of how the Old Testament pictures the manifestations of God’s glory, but even these tell barely one half of the story. The figures of storm and tempest, fire and lightning, impress us with the power of God. But these natural forces are capricious, acting without reason and riding roughshod over man and beast. They are like the tyrannical rulers of men who from time to time have wrought misery and death amongst their fellow men. If, therefore, we were to think of the glory of God only in these figures, which emphasize His terrible power, we should get a very one-sided view of what God is like.

If we now return to Psalm 97, we find that mention is made there not only of cloud and darkness, fire and lightning, but also of righteousness and judgment. The glory of God consists not only of power and greatness but also of moral qualities, goodness, righteousness, faithfulness, holiness. We quoted earlier from Psalm 145, where the Psalmist writes of men speaking of God’s terrible acts and declaring His greatness. But immediately that thought gives way to another:

“They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness” (Psa.145:7).

And later:

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psa.145:17).

The whole of the Old Testament bears witness to the wisdom of God manifest in the works of His creation, to His faithfulness in the covenants made with His chosen people, to the righteousness of His ways and judgments, and to the holiness of Him who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab.1:13). In God, therefore, there is the alliance of absolute power with perfect holiness. That is His glory as revealed in the Old Testament. To understand it more fully and its implications for us, we turn to Isaiah’s vision of the glory of God.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Isaiah records’ how in the year that king Uzziah died he had a vision of the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, his train filling the temple, and he heard voices crying “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”. (Isa. 6:1-3) The holiness of God was impressed upon Israel from the earliest days of their history. The song of deliverance which Moses and the people sang when they were saved from the Egyptians testifies to it:

“Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness?” (Exod. 15:11).

It is the basis of their law: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). The glory which is to be rendered to the name of the Lord is associated with the worship of Him “in the beauty of holiness”. (1Chronicles 16:29, 2 Chronicles 20:21, Psa 29:2, Psa 96:9). In the words of the Psalmist, “God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness”. (Psa 47:8). To Isaiah God is “the holy one of Israel” (Isa. 5:19, 24) her creator, saviour, redeemer and king; and in the words of Habakkuk, “The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him”. (Hab. 2:20).

Holiness signifies primarily that which is set apart. It is used of the nation of Israel, chosen to be God’s witnesses (Isa. 43:10). Of the place in the tabernacle and the temple set aside for special service to God of the garments of the priests, the vessels of the tabernacle, and the oil with which they were anointed. Exod. 30:22-33.

These are only examples of that which was set apart for God. Typical of the reverence in which the holy person, place or thing was to be held are the instructions given to Moses for the manufacture of incense which was to be holy for the Lord and which it was forbidden to make for the people themselves:

“And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people” (Exod. 30:38)

This conception of holiness as that which is set apart, when applied to God, emphasizes His separateness, His remoteness, His wholly otherness and the gulf between Him and man. He is “the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Is. 57:15), dwelling in the high and holy place. Holiness, however, in the Old Testament means something more than mere physical separation; it signifies a special quality in that which is separate. This was impressed on Israel in the meticulous care with which every aspect of their religious life as a nation was to be approached, as typified in the detailed instructions regarding the tabernacle, the priestly offices and the sacrifices. It was the failure of the nation as a whole to perceive the moral lesson which lay behind these ordinances which led to their downfall, causing their worship to degenerate into a meaningless observance of outward forms, honouring God with their lips but their hearts being far from Him (Mark 7:6). Because of this their outward show of worship became quite unacceptable to God, as He declares through Amos:

“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24).

So, too, in his own day our Lord castigated the religious leaders for precisely the same fault:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (Matt 23:23-24).

But, if Israel failed to learn it, the lesson remained: holiness involves not only separation in the sense of being set apart for service to God but sanctification in the sense of being fitted for that service.

It is an easy transition from this meaning of holiness to the thought of the moral perfection of Him who is altogether holy. It is this which separates God from man as much as His power and His greatness, and nowhere is it more beautifully epitomized than in the words of Isaiah:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”. (Isa. 55:8-9).

This is the holiness of God and this is His glory. Before Him in whom might and right are One, men bow in awe.

GOD'S LAW AND JUDGMENTS

This aspect of God's revelation of Himself cannot be overemphasized because of its practical implications for us. Right and wrong, duty and obligation, bear no meaning unless they are related to some absolute standard. For the Christian that standard is the law of God and God is the supreme lawgiver. This is the lesson which Adam learned through bitter experience. God alone can say with final authority, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not", and, having said it, enforce it with absolute judgment and justice. The consciousness of right and wrong, therefore, is not the response of the individual to the changing social requirements of the community in which he lives, but is the evidence of moral law, God's law, in the universe. Moreover, as God is holy, perfect and good, so is His law:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psa.19:7-8).

The holiness of God is, therefore, the basis for our understanding of the law of God, to a fuller consideration of which we shall return shortly. The holiness of God is also the basis for understanding the teaching of the Old Testament, which has tended in recent years to be neglected, concerning the judgments of God. Because God is holy, the final achievement of His purpose in filling the earth with His glory demands that the earth shall be purged and purified of all that offends against His holiness. It is for this that the prophets visualize the outpouring of God's judgments, and in them they see the final vindication of right and the calling to account before God of men who are responsible for their words and deeds. The certainty of judgment and responsibility underlies the whole teaching of the Old Testament. It is focussed in the short prophecy of Habakkuk where the prophet asks of God the question which many still ask to-day, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" (Hab. 1:13). "Why", says modern man, "does God allow such things?" The answer of the prophet is that these things are but for a time and that nemesis will overtake God's enemies bringing woe to them in the day of judgment when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). The very existence of God is the assurance of this: "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).

The revelation of God's holiness leads us to think of Him as lawgiver and judge and it raises acutely the question of our duty to Him and our relationship with Him. We must, therefore, enquire what is the content of God's law and what it reveals of practical importance to us. The clue to this is given in Psalm 24, which begins with an acknowledgment of God as creator and ends with triumphant praise to the Lord of hosts, the king of glory. Between these two ascriptions to the greatness of God there occur these words:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, And righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psa. 24:5).

The thought here is that the holiness of God demands holiness from men, and this was precisely the injunction which was given by God to Israel:

“For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Lev.11:44)

THE VISION OF ISAIAH

If we now return to the vision of Isaiah we can perhaps appreciate more fully the significance of the words which he heard, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”. The glory of the Lord is twofold: it is the glory of Him who is the creator and sustainer of all things who rules over the works of His creation with absolute power and it is the glory also of Him whose name is Holy and who demands holiness from men. Before that vision Isaiah bowed in awe, crying out,

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa.6:5).

The impression which was created on Isaiah is typical of the impression which has been created always on men who have seen the vision of the glory of God. It has made them conscious how far removed God is from them, how high the standard of conduct which is required of them and how far short they fall of it despite their best endeavour. The book of Job tells, with all the vividness born of dramatic presentation, how Job rebelled against this viewpoint but was taught by his own bitter experience and finally by the voice of the Lord Himself to accept it:

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5-6).

It is this recognition of the gulf, which is set between God and man which causes the Old Testament writers to emphasize the part which is played by fear in man’s relationship with God. There are numerous Proverbs about the fear of the Lord: it is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Prov. 1:7 and 9:10). It prolongs man’s days (Prov. 14:26 and 27). It is a fountain of life, and in it is strong confidence (Prov. 10:27).

The Preacher concludes that the end of all his experiences and reflection is to impress the

lesson, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). In Psalm 19 the Psalmist relates the fear of the Lord both to the law and the judgments of God:

“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” (Psa. 19:8-9)

This fear of the Lord is not a cringing abasement before the terror of His might; it is rather reverence and awe for His glorious holiness. It expresses itself in the formal act of kneeling before God:

“O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, For he is our God! And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” (Psa. 95:6-7).

True worship, however, does not consist simply of formal acts-of obeisance, because God’s demand of holiness penetrates outward show and goes to the very heart of man. Micah utters words of warning against the dangers of formal worship:

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:6-8).

In this declaration Micah is not trying to make our task easier by reducing it to the level of ordinary, decent, human behaviour, but is pointing out rather the sternness of the task. It is not difficult to offer calves and rams and oil in sacrifice, but it is difficult always to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly. Before that standard of holiness we are all condemned and we cry out with Isaiah, “I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:6-7)

If there were nothing to add to this, our relationship with God would begin and end with fear. We should bow before His all-consuming glory, but the relationship would never progress beyond that of worshipped and worshippers, law-giver and subjects. We should try to honour God’s requirement of holiness, but the weakness and frailty of our nature cause us continually to err and in the end we could hope for nothing but the righteous judgment of God’s holiness on our own imperfection.

If, however, we return again to Isaiah’s vision, we find that Isaiah’s confession of his uncleanness is followed by this:

“Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isa 6:6)

The action is symbolic of the aspect of God’s relationship with His people which we must next consider, the characteristic of which is that God, without any dimming of His glory or diminishing of His holiness, yet draws near to men and women and calls them into a personal relationship with Him. This of itself opens up a new field of thought about the character of God.

THE LOVE OF GOD

Psalm 145 contains another strand of thought alongside that of the greatness of God manifested in His “wondrous works” and “terrible acts”. This is the thought of the love and grace of God towards His people whereby God draws near to those who seek Him. It is expressed in such words as these:

“The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; Slow to anger, and of great mercy; The Lord is good to all, And his tender mercies are over all his works, The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, To all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The Lord preserves all them that love him: But all the wicked will he destroy.” (Psa.145:8, 9, 18-20)

God’s love for His people is implicit in all His dealings with Israel. Though the back sliding of the people brought the fierce wrath of His judgments upon them, yet those judgments were poured out in love as a father chastises his son. Indeed, time and again the prophets represent the sin of the people against the will of God as the more heinous because of the close relationship between them and God, a relationship which they describe in terms of father and child or husband and wife. No closer personal relationships are known to man than these which the prophets use in some of their most poignant passages to describe God’s relationship with His people. Hosea pictures Israel as a loved son called out of Egypt and Ephraim as a small boy being taught by his father to walk. (Hosea 11:1, 3).

Jeremiah presents Israel as a young bride following her divine spouse in the wilderness, (Jer. 2:2). And Ezekiel traces the story of that child back to its infancy, how God found her as a new-born waif “cast out in the open field”, took pity on her, nursed and nurtured her through childhood until she was old enough to be betrothed to Him. (Ezek. 16:3-14). Isaiah, with all the poetry of his language, brings a message of hope to God’s people:

“For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but

with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” (Isa. 54:5-8).

GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

These are strong figures of speech, but they emphasize the closeness of God’s relationship with His people and they give us the clue to much that we read in the Old Testament of that relationship. They explain, for example, why the first and greatest commandment in the law given by God to Israel through Moses is “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4-5; see Matt. 22:34-40).

This injunction to love God is often repeated.(e.g. Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 10:12; 11:1, 13 and 89) As between human beings, whether we think of the love of husband and wife, of parents and children or simply of the love between friends, love is the characteristic of the closest personal relationships which we know. A careful study of the Old and New Testaments reveals some important differences between the nature of God’s love for man and that of love in human relationships. Into these differences we cannot here enquire. They do not, however, disturb the fundamental facts that God’s love for man implies a close personal relationship and that, as love responds to love in human relationships, so in the relationship between God and man, man’s love is the response to God’s love. This latter fact was impressed on Israel in the words of Moses: “And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt... Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments ...” (Deut. 4:37 and 40). The order of these words is of the utmost significance: man’s duty arises from his response to the love of God in action. In the New Testament this is repeated again and again as the basis of the Christian life.

Again the figures used by the prophets to express the closeness of God’s relationship with His people throw light on what is often called God’s “covenant relationship” with them. The basis of this is to be found in the records of the covenants which God made with the patriarchs, Noah (Gen. 9:8-17), Abram (Gen.15 and 17:1-14), Isaac and Jacob, with the nation as a whole, and with David their king (2 Sam.7:8-18). A covenant is an agreement entered into between two parties which creates rights and duties between them, but these agreements are of many kinds. They may be between man and man, between husband and wife, between king and people, between victor and vanquished. In each instance the basis and nature of the obligations entered into is different. Between husband and wife the basis is love, between victor and vanquished, fear. Between husband and wife the nature of the obligations is reciprocal, between victor and vanquished the rights are likely to belong mainly to the victor and the duties to be laid mainly on the vanquished. What, then, is the nature of God’s covenant with His people? Jeremiah gives us the clue in his famous “covenant passage”:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house

of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33).

Here Jeremiah, looking both backward and forward, interprets the covenant as emphasizing how close is God’s relationship to His people. This also is of the greatest importance when we come to the New Testament which itself means the new covenant.

The same background of thought illuminates the teaching of the Old Testament concerning the redemptive activity of God. A passage was quoted earlier from Isaiah 54 where the prophet, speaking of God as the husband of Israel, rests on that conception the assurance that, though Israel may temporarily be forsaken because of her iniquity, yet in the final outcome she will receive the mercy and everlasting kindness of her God. This thought the prophet carries a stage further in chapter 63, verses 8 and 9, where he speaks of God as in some sense sharing the affliction of His people: “For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not he: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” In similar manner we may think of a father sharing the experiences of his child, rejoicing in his pleasures and grieving with him in his sorrows. The English word “sympathy” epitomizes this idea in its root meaning of “suffering with” another. The thought of the prophet concerning God as the redeemer of His people is based on the duties of a kinsman under the law of Moses, one of which was to buy back any of his kin who had sold himself into slavery (Lev. 25:47-49). This duty of a kinsman is beautifully illustrated in the story of Ruth. In relation to God as the redeemer of His people there is therefore here again a background of ideas which emphasizes the closeness of God’s relationship to His people and which is carried over into the New Testament in regard to God’s redeeming activity in Jesus Christ.

GOD THE FATHER

As with the people as a whole, so with the individual, there is unfolded in the Old Testament the possibility of entering into a personal relationship with God. Often this is presented as a paradox (as indeed it is) that God, who is so great, should yet condescend to lowly man. Two passages from Isaiah illustrate this:

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa. 57:15).

“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things

hath mine hand made ... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” (66:1-2).

The same thought underlies the call of the prophet in an earlier chapter from which we have already quoted, where it is associated with the declaration that God’s ways are not man’s ways:

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”. (Isa.55:6)

So the individual it called on, in words reminiscent of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), to respond to the holiness and love of God by turning from his evil ways and seeking the forgiveness of God while it may be had.

We are thus brought to a distinctive conception of the fatherhood of God. In a general sense God may be thought of as the father of all His creation, but the phrases “God the Father” and “Our Father in Heaven” express the special relationship which exists between God and those whom He calls to be His people. This relationship rests on the nature of God as a living and personal God. He is revealed in the Old Testament as actively guiding the works of His creation to the end which He has appointed, the filling of the earth with His glory, and also as drawing near to those who seek Him. Moreover the qualities which are revealed in the Godhead, righteousness and holiness, love and mercy, justice and equity, are personal qualities which those who seek God are called upon to cultivate. “Be ye holy, for I am holy” is the fundamental principle of man’s relationship with God and the recognition of this must shape his life.

In the New Testament the conception of the fatherhood of God acquires a new significance, first through God’s revelation of Himself in the person of His only begotten son Jesus Christ, and secondly through God’s work of redemption in Christ whereby there is given to those who receive him “the privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12 RV). Later essays will examine this in detail, but we must endeavour here in broad outline to see it as the climax of God’s revelation of Himself in the Old Testament. For climax it is. Three familiar passages from the New Testament place this beyond doubt. John, in the prologue to his gospel, takes our minds back to the word of God which at creation brought forth light amid darkness. That word, he says, the expression of the mind and purpose of God, was made flesh in Jesus Christ, who also was a light shining in darkness, in whom men beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-14). Paul, writing to the Corinthians, goes back to the light of God’s glory which shone on the face of Moses at Sinai and compares it to “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6) The letter to the Hebrews points to the ways in which God had spoken before in the law and the prophets culminating in the revelation in His Son, “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”

(Heb. 1:3). Clearly then, without examining in any greater detail all the implications of this teaching, the writers of the New Testament thought of the revelations of God's glory in the past as coming to their climax in the person of His Son.

THE UNITY OF GOD

In all the Old Testament revelation of God, there is the unwavering affirmation that God is one. He unites in Himself power and glory, holiness and righteousness, love and mercy. Other nations had many gods, endowing one with this virtue and another with that. The God of Israel is Himself altogether perfect embodying within the Godhead all truth and goodness. He is not the supreme God amongst many Gods but the only God, who calls upon His people so to love Him and challenges other nations to show a God like Him.

The teaching of the New Testament is firmly based in the thought of the Old, no less in regard to the unity of God than in any other respect. In the revelation of God which reaches its climax in the person of Jesus Christ there is no division of the unity of the Godhead. In Old and New Testament alike God is revealed as one. As Moses declared to Israel, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut 6:4), so Paul wrote to the Ephesians that "there is ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". (Eph. 4:5) The philosophy of a later age has sought to extract from the New Testament a development in thought concerning the Godhead which would preserve the idea of unity while admitting the conception of a trinity within that unity, but the very complexity of this conception as set forth in the Athanasian Creed (381AD) distinguishes it sharply from the simple teaching of the apostles.

THE NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION: REVELATION AND REDEMPTION

It is because God is personal in the sense already mentioned, and because the divine qualities are capable of being and must be expressed and lived out in the lives of men and women, that the fullness of God's revelation of Himself comes not in any spoken or written word but in the person of His Son. In him and in his life those qualities are seen. Men no longer hear about them as abstract things: they see them expressed in a human life and, in doing so, they see the truth of God. So Jesus himself told his disciples, not "The words which I speak to you are words of truth", but "I am ... the truth" (John 14:6), because the truth about God and the truth of God were exhibited in him.

This is what John means when he writes, "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Jesus does not merely teach men about God: he does that, but he does more, because in all that he says and does, and is he manifests the divine nature, mind and ways. When Philip asks him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8), Jesus replies, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father".

This claim of Jesus was implemented in many ways. His miracles were not the conventional

actions of a mere wonder-worker. The people suggested that, and Jesus refuted it by pointing to his works as evidence of God's power working in and through him. Few indeed could fail to be reminded by them of the powers of the age to come of which the prophets had spoken when the tongue of the dumb should sing, or see the storm stilled on the lake without recalling the Psalmist's words concerning the Almighty who "stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people" (Ps. 65:7). But the significance of the miracles lies even deeper. Physical and spiritual evil are interwoven, and Jesus, as he can overcome the one, can overcome the other, and "has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6, Mark 2:10). So his works exhibit the power of God, and provide a foretaste of the kingdom of God when that power will be supreme: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you".(Matt. 12:28)

Again, the words of Jesus are words of power. Matthew and Mark record that he taught the people as one having authority, in contrast with his contemporaries. He himself claims to expound the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and sets them before his disciples in parables. He claims for his teaching authority greater than the ancient law: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time ... but I say unto you" (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33). He claims to pronounce the final judgment on the lives of men: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ... And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). He penetrates the heart and mind of men, and tears aside the veil of apparent righteousness which concealed the inner vice of the Scribes and Pharisees. Conscious of his mission and determined to fulfil it, he tells his disciples of his coming death; and, when they seek to deter him, he rebukes them. Throughout he displays unity of mind and purpose with God: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

In these and other ways Jesus manifests the power and authority, holiness and righteousness, judgment and justice, mercy and compassion, which are the glory of God. In him therefore the truth of God is incarnate. But not the truth only, for John, by adding the word "grace", reminds us of the fact that in Jesus Christ God has not only revealed Himself to men but also has opened up for them a way of deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. Men need not only the knowledge of God: that would simply dazzle them with the glory of divine holiness and righteousness and leave them without hope. They need also to be reconciled to God and restored to fellowship with Him, confessing their faults, receiving forgiveness and being brought to a new way of life. It is no part of our task to deal with the theme of man's need of redemption or God's act of redemption, but it is essential to an understanding of God's nature and purpose to remember that in Jesus Christ God has acted as well as spoken, so that we see in him not only the truth but also the grace of God, because he is not only the light but also the life of men. So Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), and John relates the two themes of revelation and redemption by showing that the act of God's love in giving Jesus Christ to die for the sins of men is the supreme manifestation of the truth about the nature of God: "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). The background

of the New Testament doctrine of redemption is the teaching of the Old Testament regarding God's love for His people so beautifully expressed by Isaiah and the other prophets in the passages which have already been examined.

RESTORATION AND RE-CREATION

In the Old Testament God's love for Israel is portrayed by the prophets in the promise of restoration. Though they were to be carried away captive into foreign lands and scattered to all corners of the earth (as in fact they have been), yet the day would come when they would be gathered and restored to their own land. The vision of Ezekiel in chapter 37 is typical of this aspect of prophetic teaching. But the restoration is something very much more than bringing back a remnant of the people to their own land and there establishing them in a kind of political and economic Utopia. The basis of that restoration is clearly set forth by Isaiah: "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places ..." (Isa. 32:18). Peace can only be assured by righteousness and judgment, and the people who enjoy peace must themselves be righteous. The restoration, therefore, is not of the old people with their old ways but of a new people re-created by the writing of God's law in their hearts. As only love can create, only love can re-create, and the making of a new people holy unto the Lord can only be achieved through the love of God and their response to it.

This pattern of thought is readily discernible in the New Testament also. The work of God in Christ is to restore men to fellowship with Him. It is spoken of as a work of reconciliation, of bringing us into peace with God, of making those who were afar off now near to God, of leading men into fellowship with God and Christ (1 John 1:3). As with Israel, however, the restoration is not simply bringing men as they are into fellowship with God: they must be made fit for the fellowship of his holiness and righteousness and that demands that they be "re-created" (2 Cor 5:17, Gal. 6:15). Countless figures are used in the New Testament to emphasize the gulf which divides this new life in Christ from the life of the natural man. The change is described both as a new birth (John 3:3-8) and also as a death and resurrection (Rom 6:1-6).

Our redemption is represented as something which quickens, cleanses, washes, and sanctifies. In the new life we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, to set our affections on things above, to walk not after the flesh but after the spirit of God, to mortify our natural desires and impulses, to put off the "old man" of the flesh and to "put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). Perhaps the most impressive figure is that used both by our Lord, and also by Paul, where the life of the Christian is likened to the life of a branch in a tree and of a scion grafted into its stock. As the life of the one is dependent on and its quality determined by the life which flows into it from the main stem, so the quality of life which is in Christ and which is a manifestation of the divine nature itself must flow into and transform the Christian believer.

This can only be achieved by a willing surrender of the whole man, mind and heart, to the influence and indwelling of the word and spirit of God for the shaping and transforming of his life. That surrender is the response of the individual to the love of God manifested in Christ, a response which is typified in the Psalmist's question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12). Moreover, because the love of God is seen pre-eminently in the sacrifice of Christ, the dominant note of response in the Christian life is itself sacrifice. "The distinctively Christian conception of life", it has been said, "is one which draws its whole power, inspiration and efficacy from Christ's sacrifice." (Lionel Spencer Thornton 'The Common Life in the Body of Christ' p. 327).

Those who make the response are brought into a relationship with God which is not that of ruler and subjects governed by fear but of Father and sons and daughters made one in love. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature", Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:17). And again, to the Colossians, the believer has "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). So the shaping of the life of the Christian believer is thought of in terms of a new creation after the pattern of his Lord and Master.

In an imperfect world, however, with imperfect people, that work can never be brought to full fruition. The treasure of God's revelation is held "in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7), leaky and liable to be broken; the believer is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth; he looks, "according to the promises of God, for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

So, as he endeavours to let the spirit and word of God shape his life in accordance with the divine pattern, he looks forward, as the prophets did of old, to the day when the glory of the Lord will fill the earth and prays that in that day he may be amongst the company of the redeemed who will enjoy the fullness of God's fellowship through the ages of eternity. In Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, John describes his vision of that day in terms of a new creation. He sees the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. He hears the testimony that God makes all things new and dwells with His people and he sees the holy city lit by the light of the glory of God and His Lamb. As therefore the Bible begins with the record of God's creation, it ends with the vision of His new creation; as in the beginning light shone in the darkness, so in the end the glory of God shall give His people everlasting light.

This is the vision which has sustained men of faith in all ages, not the day-dream of idealists but a certainty rooted in the very nature of God Himself. The activity of God revealed in the pages of His word must find its end in the establishment of the kingdom of God and the filling of the earth with His glory and, since God's glory is His holiness and righteousness, these things are the foundation of that kingdom. Here is the challenge to the individual: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Only thus may we find true worship which will shape our lives, raising us above the level of mundane things,

freeing us from the shackles of materialism and delivering us from the despair of the philosopher who sees no vision but that of Bertrand Russell's "the debris of a universe in ruins".

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