



The Biblical Theology of the Church

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Do Christians need to think again about the doctrine of the church? Many would answer, 'No!' Mention the church and they begin to smell the musty odour of churchianity. It rises from the crypts of institutional religion, and permeates the seat-cushions of formal traditions. Martin Luther thanked God that even a child of seven knows what the church is. 'Let the church focus on the gospel, preach Christ and him crucified, and the church will become part of the answer instead of the problem'. That is the way Luther's point is often made today.

Others would add that Luther's child of seven has had plenty of help in the last few years. If the teaching of the Bible about the church has been neglected in past centuries, that neglect has certainly been more than remedied. Few cathedrals have been constructed in the last half century, but theologians have launched a building boom of their own. The publishing skyline is full of books about the church. [1]

Not all of those books are theological, to be sure. Some writers assume that we cannot expect Scripture to answer the problems of the computer age. The Apostle Paul did not have to face Marxism nor deal with the problems of colonial exploitation and its aftermath. He was not troubled with the internecine warfare of rival denominations and non-denominational agencies. Nor did he have to plant churches in a tribal cultural setting. He worked within his own culture and could ordain as leaders, even in the Gentile churches, men who had been instructed in the Scriptures as adherents of the Jewish synagogues. With such considerations the contemporary ecclesiastical pundit eases the Apostle to the Gentiles into his place back in the Hellenistic age. He is then free to display his own grasp of sociometrics, group dynamics, structuralist anthropology, and political hermeneutics. [2]

It would be foolish, of course, to suggest that the behavioural sciences should be set over against Biblical understanding. In applying the teaching of God's Word, we must surely understand as fully as we can the circumstances to which it is applied. Yet even in that understanding, we seek to manifest the mind of Christ. Certainly we cannot begin our understanding of the church with sociological analysis. We must begin with the teaching of the Bible, and return to the Bible again and again to deepen and renew our understanding. Theology is reflective; we do understand God's revelation better as the context of our own

experience widens and varies our perspective. But the church rests upon the foundation of apostolic teaching. The authoritative words of the inspired witnesses chosen and endowed of the Spirit communicate to us the full and final revelation of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:39-42; Heb. 2:2-4; Rev. 22:18, 19).

The doctrine of the church is not the most fundamental doctrine of Scripture. J.C. Hoekendijk may be right in saying, ' In history a keen ecclesiological interest has, almost without exception, been a sign of spiritual decadence...' [3] At the Third World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lund in 1952 the conferees acknowledged: ' In our work we have been led to the conviction that it is of decisive importance for the advance of ecumenical work that the doctrine of the church be treated in close relation both to the doctrine of Christ and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit' . [4]

Indeed, the doctrine of the church is not only closely related to the doctrine of the Trinity, it flows from it. The promise of God' s covenant is, ' I will... be your God, and you will be my people' (Lev. 26:12; 2 Cor. 6:16). God' s people are his own possession, those whom he has formed for himself that they might set forth his praise (Is. 43:21). The focus of Scripture is on the living God, of whom, through whom, and unto whom are all things, not least the people he has redeemed and claimed as his own.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Biblical doctrine of the church is directly related to God' s revelation of himself. As we trace the history of redemption recorded in the Word of God, we find that the church comes into view as the people of God, the disciples of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Yet these views of the redeemed do not simply succeed one another; far less do they exclude one another. The Apostle Peter, writing to Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, calls them ' a chosen people, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Pet. 2:9). To be sure, they were once ' not a people' , but now they are ' the people of God' (v. 10). The language that described the calling of Israel in the Old Testament Peter applies to the New Testament people of God. On the other hand, Christ is central for the Old Testament as well as for the New, and Paul, reflecting on the experience of Israel in the wilderness, affirms that ' the Rock that followed them was Christ' (1 Cor. 10:4). That same leading of Israel through the desert is ascribed by the prophet Isaiah to the Holy Spirit (Is. 63:9-14).

To gain the richness of biblical revelation, we do well to trace the unfolding of the theme of the church through the history of God' s saving work. In doing so we are instructed by the transformations of that theme as well as by the underlying unity of the purpose and work of God. To focus our consideration, we may reflect on the *calling* of the church. The church is called to God, called to be his people. By that relation to God the being of the church is defined. The church is also called, by that very relation, to a bond of life together. It ministers not only to God, but also to those who make up its company. The church is also called in the midst of the world. Its ministry is therefore threefold: it ministers *to God* in worship, *to the saints* in nurture, and *to the world* in witness.

In systematic theology the doctrine of the church is often presented under the rubrics of the Nicene Creed: the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Yet these attributes of the church

flow from the more fundamental teaching of the Bible regarding the nature of the church as it is related to the Lord himself. Ecclesiology is part of theology. We gain the clearest light on the issues that the church now faces when we reflect on the calling of the church by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This trinitarian approach to the doctrine of the church may then be structured in relation to its calling to minister in worship, nurture, and witness.

I. THE CHURCH AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

A. God's Worshipping Assembly

Matthew's Gospel reports the words of blessing that Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in response to Peter's apostolic confession. Jesus then said, 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it' (Mt. 16:18). Matthew uses the common term for 'church' in the New Testament, the term *ekklesia*. It was once the habit of critics to question the authenticity of Matthew's report. Jesus spoke of the kingdom, and knew nothing of the church, they said. [5] Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls there has been a belated acceptance of the genuineness of the saying. The scrolls are full of the concept of the community, understood as the congregation of the saints awaiting the coming of the Lord. Further, the thought of the congregation being established upon the confession of the truth is also prominent in the Dead Sea writings. [6] So is the figure of the rock, and of the building established upon it. [7] The parallels between the language of the Dead Sea sectaries and the words of Jesus do not, however, indicate that Jesus was dependent upon the Essenes. The background to both is the Old Testament.

1. *The People of God Constituted as God's Assembly*

The concept of the people of God as assembly has its Old Testament roots in the gathering of Israel before the Lord at Mount Sinai. God had demanded of Pharaoh, 'Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert' (Ex. 7:16b). That service was to be a specific gathering for worship ('a feast unto me', Ex. 5:1). Of course there were further implications of that demand. Pharaoh regarded the Israelites as his slaves, subject to his own divine claims. His lordship was directly challenged by God's claim. The worship, the service of the Lord on the part of Israel, would mark them as his people, his sons (Ex. 4:22, 23). It would be a covenant-making ceremony in which the claim of God upon his people and the claim of the people upon God would be ratified in worship.

The term *ekklesia* describes an actual assembly, a gathering of people together. The same is true of the Old Testament term *qahal* that is translated by *ekklesia* in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. [8] The words themselves do not have the restricted meaning of our word, 'church'. Yet, when Jesus said, 'I will build my church' (whether he spoke Greek, or used in Aramaic a word that could be so translated), he was not simply saying, 'I will bring together a gathering of people'. Rather, he was using a well-known term that described the people of God. The 'assembly in the desert' (Acts 7:38) was the definitive assembly for Israel, the covenant making assembly when God claimed his redeemed people as his own. In Deuteronomy it is

spoken of as ' the day of the assembly' (Dt. 4:10 LXX; 9:10; 10:4, 18:16).

The key to the meaning of ' assembly' is found in God' s command to Moses: ' Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children' (Dt. 4:10). The assembly is a gathering to meet with God. God declares, ' You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself' (Ex. 19:4). God' s deliverance of Israel from Egypt is indeed an act of liberation. God strikes off their yoke and enables them to go upright (Lv. 26:13). But liberation from slavery in Egypt is not the final purpose of God' s saving work. God brings them out that he might bring them in, in to his assembly, to the great company of those who stand before his face. The Lord who assembles the people to himself is the Lord of hosts. His heavenly assembly is composed of the mighty ones (*'elohim*), the holy ones (*qedoshim*), the sons of God (*benei ha'elohim*) over whom he reigns as King (Jb. 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 1 Ki. 22:19; Dn. 7:10). When the Lord descends at Sinai, the tens of thousands of the heavenly holy ones are assembled with the congregation that is gathered at his feet (Dt. 33:2; Ps. 68:17). The earthly assembly, too, is composed of the saints of the Lord (the same term can describe saints or angels). The Dead Sea community had a vivid awareness of this Old Testament panorama. Those who were added to the community became members of God' s eternal assembly. They gained a place with the holy angels (1QS 2:25; 11:7-9; IQH 3:21; 11:11, 12).

God' s assembly at Sinai is therefore the immediate goal of the exodus. God brings his people into his presence that they might hear his voice and worship him. ' I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me' (Ex. 20:2, 3). Standing in the assembly of the Lord, hearing his voice, the people gain their identity from the self-identification of the Lord.

Later Assemblies

The assembly at Sinai could not remain forever in session, however. It was succeeded by other covenant-making assemblies. Deuteronomy, the second giving of the law, provides the account of the renewing of the covenant in another great assembly before the death of Moses. When Joshua brought the people into the land, he convened a great assembly between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and read the blessings and curses of the covenant from the law (Jos. 8:34, 35). David convoked an assembly to secure the succession of Solomon (1 Ch. 28:2, 8; 29:10, 20). Jehoshaphat, Joash, and Hezekiah summoned assemblies of covenant renewal (2 Ch. 20:5, 14; 23:3; 29:23-32; 30:2-25).

After the exile, the great assembly under Ezra and Nehemiah was gathered to hear the Word of God (Ne. 8). This assembly was regarded in later times as the prototype of the synagogue. The reading of the law in the synagogues and the prayers that were offered found their precedent in this post-exilic assembly.

In addition to these assemblies of renewal on historic occasions, there were other assemblies of Israel. The law required that the people gather three times a year at the appointed place of worship (Lv. 23). These were festival assemblies: the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of

Tabernacles. At this last feast every seventh year the law was to be read and the covenant renewed (Dt. 31:9-13).

To be a member of the people of God was to have the privilege of standing in the great assembly before his face. To be sure, worshipping Israelites could rejoice in fellowship with one another as they assembled together. They could sing, ' How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!' (Ps. 133:1). But even that joy is a blessing that flows down from above, like the dew of Hermon, or the ointment running down the beard of the high priest (Ps. 133:2, 3). Israel is bound together as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). Israelites are a nation formed for worship, called to assemble in the courts of the Lord, and to praise together the name of the Most High.

The Future Festival Promised

Israel failed woefully in this priestly calling. The unity of worship was broken when Jeroboam set up the image of a calf at Bethel to bar the pilgrimage of the northern tribes to worship at Jerusalem. In the temple at Jerusalem, the whole purpose of the assembly was shattered by idolatry. And so in judgment God scattered the people in exile; yet he did not forget his calling to a priestly nation. The prophets proclaimed a new assembly of the people of God. It would come in the glorious future when God would again manifest his presence. Isaiah pictures a great feast, spread on the mount of God, to which not only the remnant of Israel but also the remnant of the nations would be gathered in (Is. 2:2-4; 25:6-8; 49:22; 66:18-21; cf. Jer. 48:47; 49:6, 39). Zechariah sees a new Jerusalem, transformed into a holy city by the presence of the Lord (Zc. 12:7-9; 13:1, 9; 14:7, 8, 16-21).

Pentecost Fulfilment

Jesus promised that he would build his assembly by his death and resurrection. After he rose from the dead, he commanded his disciples to remain together in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit. That gift was poured out as they were assembled together. It was at Pentecost, and the theme of the feast of Pentecost was fulfilled. Pentecost was the time of the first-fruits, the beginning of the great harvest of redemption. Peter preached the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel. The Spirit had been poured out, the worship of the new age had been ushered in. The church, the assembly for worship, was praising God. The great eschatological feast had begun. Jesus in his parables had spoken of the feast prepared, and of his mission as the Servant of the Lord to call to heaven' s feast the host of poor and broken sinners who filled the byways of the earth (Lk. 14:15-24). Now the ingathering had begun.

The gospel call is a call to worship, to turn from sin and call upon the name of the Lord. It is no accident that the New Testament church is formed by the coming of God the Spirit in the midst of an assembly gathered in praise. The church in any city is composed of those who ' call upon the name of the Lord' in that place (Acts 9:14; 1 Cor. 1:2). Peter writes that the church is the people for God' s own possession, ' that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Pet. 2:9).

The Assembly on Mount Zion

The picture of the church as a worshipping assembly is nowhere more powerfully presented than by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 12:18-29). He contrasts the worship of God at Mount Sinai with the worship of the New Covenant. The worship at Sinai was an overwhelming experience. Even Moses said, ' I am trembling with fear' (v.21). Yet the fear of Moses was inspired by merely physical phenomena - a fire that could be touched (v.18). In contrast, the church of the New Covenant comes to the full reality: ' our God is a consuming fire' . If Moses feared the earthly manifestation of God' s presence, how much more should we be filled with reverence and awe? We do not come to Mount Sinai in our worship, but to Mount Zion. That Zion is not the earthly, but the heavenly Zion, the sanctuary of the eternal city of God. For the author of Hebrews, this is not a figurative way of speaking. The heavenly Jerusalem is not a Platonic abstraction. It is as real as the living God, as real as the risen body of Jesus Christ. In our worship in Christ' s church we approach the throne of God the Judge of all. We enter the festival assembly of the saints and the angels. We gather in spirit with the spirits of just men made perfect. We enter the assembly of glory through Christ our Mediator, and the blood of his atoning death. For that reason we must hear and heed the word of the Lord, and ' worship God acceptably with reverence and awe' (v.28).

Just as the great assembly at Sinai defined the covenant people of the Old Testament, so does the heavenly assembly define the church of the New Covenant. The principle is the same, the saving purpose of God is the same. Moses and the other heroes of faith described in Hebrews 11 are among the ' spirits of righteous men made perfect' who gather with us in the heavenly assembly. Yet they without us could not be made perfect (Heb. 11:40). We now enjoy with them the worship for which they longed by faith.

Does the tremendous reality of that heavenly worship make our earthly behaviour irrelevant? Can we think, ' Since nothing can stop the heavenly hallelujahs, our feeble little gatherings on earth are of no consequence' ? That argument has often been advanced. ' Since the church invisible is one, earthly divisions are not too serious.' ' Since the heavenly church is holy, we need not worry much about either personal holiness or church discipline.'

The author of Hebrews draws the opposite conclusion. Precisely because we do approach the heavenly assembly in worship, we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). Precisely because we have the faithful promise of the city of God, we are to provoke one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).

Reverent corporate worship, then, is not optional for the church of God. It is not a form of group behavior to be accepted just because of its long tradition or its acceptability in many cultures. Rather, it brings to expression the very being of the church. It manifests on earth the reality of the heavenly assembly. The glory of God is that to which and for which the church is called.

The Word in Worship

We may not lose sight, either, of the importance of God' s Word in the assembly of worship. The description of the heavenly assembly in Hebrews 12 comes to a focus in the admonition to hear him who speaks. God spoke from Sinai; the worship of the people responded to the Word of the Lord. In the assemblies of the new covenant, the Word of God is no less central. God is not only present in the midst of his people. He speaks. The ministry of the Word of God in worship partakes of the solemnity of the occasion. Solemnity does not mean joylessness, for the Word calls to praise. Yet the authority of the Word of the Lord remains central for Christian worship. This is the Word of him who speaks from heaven (Heb. 12:25). God spoke in many different ways to the fathers through the prophets, but now he has spoken finally and conclusively through his own Son. It is that word of the Lord that ' was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will' (Heb. 2:3, 4).

Multi-level Assembling

Another consequence of the definition of the church as a worshipping assembly is the extreme flexibility that the New Testament shows with respect to its use of the term ' church' . On the one hand, the term is applied to the church universal. This is the church which is the people of God and the body of Christ without qualification (Mt. 16:18; 1 Pt. 2:9; Eph. 1:22,23). It is the church as God alone can see it, the whole company of those who have been, are now, or ever will be gathered to God in Christ. Some who perceive this New Testament concept have gone on to deny that any local gathering can be called in a full and proper sense the church. Such a gathering may form a congregation of the church, no doubt, but the church by definition must be the church universal. On the other hand, there are those who isolate what the New Testament teaches about the local church. Paul does speak of the church at Corinth as the church of Christ. In the book of Revelation, Jesus addresses letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Congregational theologians have therefore limited the church by definition to the local assembly. Anything beyond the local assembly, they say, should not be spoken of as the church, but as an association of churches. [9]

In the New Testament, the question is further complicated by the fact that *local* churches are spoken of in more than one sense. At least, local churches come in surprisingly different sizes. The church in Laodicea is a city church, but apparently there was also in Laodicea a house church, meeting in the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15). So, too, Paul can in one breath speak of the churches of Asia and of the church in the house of Aquila and Prisca (1 Cor. 16:19). The Westminster Divines noted the house churches that existed along with city churches in the New Testament and argued from this evidence for a presbyterian system of government. [10] The city church corresponded to the presbytery, and the house church to the local congregation. This line of reasoning recognized smaller and larger gatherings of the church, and further recognized that one could exist within another. The presbytery, however, was a gathering of the ministers and elders, not of the whole membership of the city church. Another difference emerged from the development of congregational structure in the cities. Village churches were

swallowed up in growing metropolitan areas. They became parish churches - gatherings of a size that was larger than the house church, surely, but perhaps smaller than some of the city churches of the New Testament.

We may ask, however, if the full flexibility of the New Testament view of the church is adequately recognized today. Because the church is defined by the heavenly assembly for worship, there is no one size of assembly on earth that is ideal or normative. Those who call upon the name of the Lord together may do so in larger or smaller assemblies. Such a recognition does not mean that smaller assemblies may be disorderly, or that assemblies at any level exist apart from the exercise of gifts of teaching, ruling, and diaconal service. But it does suggest the possibility of fuller expressions of the worshipping assembly in large city gatherings, as well as the recognition of the important place of the house church, not as a rival form of organization, but as an expression, in a more immediate setting, of the fellowship of those who call upon the name of the Lord in one particular place.

2. The Church as God's Dwelling

The picture at Sinai of the people of God as a worshipping assembly is heightened by God's provision of the tabernacle. God not only met with the people as they were assembled before him. He also came to *dwell* among them. In the wilderness where they lived in tents, God's house would be a tent, too. When they entered the land and had fixed dwellings, God would put his name in a place, and sanctify the temple of Solomon as his dwelling. The figure of the tabernacle made the presence of God more immediate and permanent.

The immanence of God's presence with his people is a continuing theme in the Pentateuch. The Lord who walked in the garden of Eden to talk with Adam and Eve continues to address the patriarchs in the land to which he called them. The altars that they built witnessed to the presence of the Lord. This is particularly dramatic in the case of Jacob at Bethel, where God descends the stairway of Jacob's dream to repeat the sure promises of the covenant to the exiled patriarch. (Genesis 28:13 should be translated, ' And, behold, the LORD stood over him...' See Genesis 35:13, where the same preposition is used, ' Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him' .) In the morning Jacob marvels at the presence of God: ' Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven' (Gn. 28:16, 17).

How important for the people of God is the dwelling of God among them? Moses gives an eloquent answer in a time of crisis before the tabernacle was built in the wilderness. While he was in the heights of Mount Sinai receiving the law of God and the plans for the tabernacle, Israel at the foot of the mountain committed idolatry before the golden calf. When Moses came down from the mountain and was confronted with the sin of the people, God proposed another plan for his relation to Israel (Ex. 33:1-3). God was too holy and the people too sinful for God to dwell among them. His presence was too great a threat. Surely, as the Holy One, he must consume them in a moment to remove their iniquity from his presence. God proposed, therefore, that the tabernacle not be built. God would not dwell in the midst. He would go before

Israel in the angel of his presence, drive out the Canaanites from the land, and give them the inheritance he had promised. But instead of living among them, he would meet with Moses in a tent set up outside the camp (Ex. 33:7-11). The elaborate plans for the tabernacle would not be necessary, since God would not have his dwelling among the people.

The reaction of Moses to that alternate plan shows how crucial the dwelling of God in the midst of Israel really is. Moses was distraught with grief. He mourned, and Israel mourned with him. Moses cried, ' If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here!' (Ex. 33:15). God' s presence among the people was the whole point of the exodus deliverance and of the inheritance of the land. Significantly, Moses prayed for God to reveal his glory. What Moses asked was the very blessing that the alternate plan would have removed: the immediate presence of the living God and the vision of his glory. God did appear to Moses, and proclaimed his covenantal Name (Ex. 33:17-34:7). Although Moses was permitted to see only God' s back, he did see the glory of the Lord. His request was granted. God did make his dwelling among Israel, and Moses could pray that God' s presence in the midst would bring not swift judgment, but the forgiveness of sins. He could pray, too, that God would not simply give the people their inheritance in Canaan, but that he would take the people as his inheritance, claiming them as his own (Ex. 34:9).

Moses' prayer was answered and the tabernacle was built. It symbolized both the threat of God' s dwelling in the midst of Israel and the grace by which God' s immediate presence was possible. The tabernacle was a dwelling in which the presence of God was both screened off and revealed. The curtains of the holy of holies, of the holy place, and of the tabernacle enclosure screened off the Holy One from the camp of sinful Israel. The curtains insulated, as it were, the holy presence of God. But the plan of the tabernacle also symbolized a way into the holiest place, an avenue to the throne of God. After the blood of atonement had been shed at the sacrificial altar, the priest could wash at the laver, enter the holy place, and present the prayers of the people. Once each year, on the day of atonement, the high priest could enter even the holy of holies to sprinkle the ark of the covenant with blood.

Christ the True Temple

The New Testament presents the fulfilment of this symbolism in Jesus Christ. He is Priest, Sacrifice, and Temple. ' Destroy this temple' , he said, ' and in three days I will raise it up' (Jn. 2:19). The temple that he spoke of was his own body. ' The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (Jn. 1:14). The outward picture of God' s dwelling among his people becomes a reality in the incarnation. [11] Further, since God is present in Christ, and Christ is present among his people, they, too, become a dwelling for God. Christ, who promises to prepare a dwelling place for his disciples, promises also that both he and the Father will come and take up their dwelling with the disciple that loves him (Jn. 14:2,23). Both the individual believer and the church are spoken of as the temple of God because of the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 5:1; Eph. 2:13-22; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:5; 2 Cor. 6:16).

The coming of the Holy Spirit fulfils the promise of the Father and makes actual the presence of God. The spiritual relationship portrayed by the temple figure includes *permanence* as well as intense immediacy. The epiphany of Pentecost was not a passing phenomenon, but the advent of the Spirit, no less central for the understanding of the church than the advent of the Son. Through the finished work of Christ the hour came when neither Mount Gerizim nor Jerusalem were holy places any longer (Jn. 4:21). In his words to the Samaritan woman, Jesus does not deny the legitimacy of the temple at Jerusalem. Salvation, he says, is of the Jews. Nor does Jesus simply state that because God is a Spirit, he cannot be worshipped at a holy place. Jesus cleansed the temple, called it his Father's house, and *violetly* affirmed its sanctity. What changed everything was the fulfilment of the temple symbolism in Jesus himself. Worship in truth could begin. It would be 'true' worship in the sense of being *gala*, unobscured by the shadows of symbolism, as the Jerusalem temple worship had been. The coming hour of which Jesus spoke was the hour of his death, resurrection, and return to the Father. True worship is not temple-less: it is worship at the true Temple, the One raised up on the third day. Because the reality has come, the symbols are fulfilled. Worship is now spiritual – in the Holy Spirit (the living water promised by Jesus). Worship is now true – in Jesus Christ the Truth (Jn. 14:6).

B. God's Chosen People

1. The Election of Israel

The church, then, is both the assembly of God and the dwelling of God. God leads his people from the convocation at Sinai to the land of their inheritance, where God will dwell in the midst of them. In addition to these great figures, God speaks directly about the people as his own. The covenantal affirmation 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people' makes explicit this relation. The prayer of Moses, 'Take us for your inheritance', is inspired by the Lord who claims Israel for himself. 'The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession' (Dt. 7:6). God purposes to make his people 'in praise, fame and honour high above all the nations he has made' (Dt. 26:19).

God's election of Israel follows upon his election of the patriarchs. It is God who calls Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees; it is God who chooses Isaac, not Ishmael, and Jacob, not Esau (*cf.* Rom. 9:11-13). Yet God's choosing was not only an expression of his purpose of blessing toward his elect. God promised not only to bless Abraham, but to make him a blessing. In him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gn. 12:3). The table of the nations in Genesis 10 prepares for the call of Abraham in Genesis 12. So, too, Israel is called to be a light to the nations: 'May God be gracious to us and bless us... that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations' (Ps. 67:1, 2).

It would be a serious mistake, however, to deny the *status* of Israel in order to affirm the *mission* of Israel. Israel is called first to fellowship with God, to be his treasure people; and only as that people does Israel witness to the nations, that they, too, might be drawn into the worship of the true and living God. God does not choose Israel just in order to use Israel. Certainly Israel is not chosen for its utility. 'The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you

were more numerous than other peoples, for you were fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers...' (Dt. 7:7, 8).

Election in Love

Here is the language of love: ' The LORD set his love upon you, because... the LORD loves you' ! The Lord pours out his love for his people in rich language. Israel is God' s son (Ex. 4:23; Ho. 1:10; 11:1-3; Is. 45:9-11), God' s bride (Ho. 1:3; Is. 50:1; Ezk. 23). God' s consummation joy over Israel will be like the joy of a husband over a bride (Zp. 3:17). Israel is God' s vineyard (Je. 12:7-9), the apple of his eye (Dt. 32:10). They are a people near to him (Ps. 148:14), borne on his shoulders (Dt. 33:12), engraved on the palms of his hands (Is. 49:16).

Yet God' s delight in Israel is of his sovereign good pleasure, the ' favour of him who dwelt in the burning bush' (Dt. 33:16). God' s people are *chosen*, not *choice* (*bachir*, not *bachur*).

Sadly, the chosen people prove themselves unworthy of God' s favour. God' s judgment is immeasurably more severe because of the privilege that Israel despised and forfeited. The adulterous wife will be stoned (Ezk. 16:40); the rebellious son will be cast out (Ho. 11:1, 8; 12:14; 13:1); the pleasant vineyard will be laid waste (Is. 5:5, 6); the planted vine will be uprooted and burned (Ezk. 19:10-14; Ps. 80:12-16). Redemptive history in the Old Testament is full of the realization of these dire predictions. The temple itself, where Israel had worshiped idols, is destroyed by the armies of Babylon. The people are carried into exile. Ezekiel sees the hopelessness of the exiled nation in his vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezk. 37).

Grace in Judgment

Yet that same vision is the Lord' s message of hope. ' Son of man, can these bones live' ? Well does the prophet answer, ' O Lord Jehovah, you know' . God' s promises will not be void, his purposes will not be frustrated.

Two great principles are given to the prophets: first, the destruction is not total. God has preserved for himself a remnant. Even if the remnant is as hopeless as dry bones in a valley, or as the scraps remaining from a lion' s kill (Am. 3:12), a remnant nevertheless it is. The second principle is that of renewal. To the dry bones life will be given. If the glory of Israel is like a cedar that has been felled by the axe of Gentile powers, nevertheless a stump is left in the ground. God promises that the stump will send forth a shoot; that shoot will be an ensign to which the nations will be gathered (Is. 10:33-11:5).

The remnant will be the faithful people of God, the true Israel. By God' s renewing grace, their hearts will be circumcised. They will know the Lord. God will make with them a new covenant (Je. 31:31-34). Paul explains this theology of the prophets. As the doctrine of the remnant shows, there is an election within the election of Israel. ' For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel' (Rom. 9:6). The true and spiritual seed are the heirs of the promise. Further,

the new Shoot that grows from the felled cedar is the Messiah. He is God' s servant Israel, in whom God will be glorified (Is. 49:3). In him the mission of Israel will be fulfilled and the status of Israel will be established in a way that surpasses all imagining. Not only will he restore the remnant of Israel, he will also be a light to the Gentiles, ' that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth' (Is. 49:6). The prophets describe the ingathering of the preserved of the nations along with the remnant of Israel (Je. 48:47; 49:6,39; Is. 66:19-21). Paul explains how Christ fulfils the ministry of the circumcision: ' For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God' s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy...' (Rom. 15:8).

Jesus Christ indeed comes to gather the remnant, the ' little flock' of God' s good pleasure who are given the kingdom (Lk. 12:32). But Jesus is more than the Sent of the Father. He is the Son of the Father. He is the Vine as well as the Shepherd, and he brings salvation in himself. The people of God are claimed at last by God himself, coming in the person of his Son. He claims them by joining them to himself as their Lord and their life. Both the status and the mission of the people of God are therefore now defined in Christ. In his Sonship they are made sons of God; as the Father has sent him into the world, so Christ has sent them into the world (Jn. 17:18).

C. God's New Nation

1. The Bond of God's Covenant

The tie that binds God' s people to their Lord binds them also to one another. The bond of Israel' s nationhood was not ethnic but religious. It was the covenant at Sinai that forged Israel into unique nationhood. Strangers and sojourners could be admitted to the assembly and people of God. They could gain an inheritance in Israel (Ex. 12:47-49; 23:9).

On the other hand, to reject God' s covenant was to be disinherited from Israel. Not only did God judge covenant-breakers with death; the Levites were commanded to execute God' s judgment upon their brethren (Ex. 32:26, 27). If a son in Israel blasphemed the name of God, his own father was to denounce him (Dt. 13:6-11). For apostasy a whole generation could perish in the wilderness, and all Israel be driven into exile. The promise of the prophet Hosea recognizes the justice of God' s disinheriting judgment. Those who once were the people of God have become *Lo-ammi*, ' no people' (Ho. 1:9). If they are again to be called *Ammi*, ' my people' , it can be only by the mercy of divine re-adoption, not by the claim of ethnic nationhood. For that reason, Paul can appeal to Hosea' s language to defend the inclusion of Gentiles among the people of God (Rom. 9:24-26). All were disinherited by sin; all were *Lo-ammi*. But by the grace of God in Christ, those who were no people have been made the people of God.

2. The Church of the New Covenant

In Christ the New Testament church is the new and true Israel, one with the Old Testament saints in the spiritual ethnicity that defines the people of God in all ages. When Peter calls the

Gentiles of Asia Minor the *diaspora* (1 Pet. 1:1), he is viewing them as the true people of God scattered in the world.

The Apostle Paul in the same way claims that Gentiles are made members of the people of God. Writing to Gentiles as the 'uncircumcision', Paul says, 'At that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world' (Eph. 2:12). Note the parallels from which the Apostle argues. To be separate from Christ is to be outside the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to God's covenant. But Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition that preserved the distinctiveness of the circumcised.

What, then, is the situation of those who are no longer separate from Christ? 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ' (Eph. 2:13). Christ has brought them within the community from which they were once excluded by the wall of separation. In Christ they have the same access to the Father as do all the true people of God. They are no more strangers from God's covenant promises; they are his covenant people. They are no more aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; instead, they have been made fellow-citizens with the saints of that commonwealth (Eph. 2:19).

Indeed, if the Apostle to the Gentiles had not taught this, the circumcision controversy described in the New Testament would never have taken place. Paul's Judaizing antagonists would have had no objection to Paul's organizing a church that was quite distinct from Israel. The rabbis were already making provision for the 'Godfearers' who had attached themselves to the synagogues but who did not wish to be circumcised or to become Jews. If Paul had merely been organizing such devout Gentiles, there would have been no objection from the zealous Jews. But what infuriated even many Jewish Christians was that Paul was claiming to bring Gentiles into the covenant, into the number of the people of God, without circumcising them. It is notable that Paul never dropped or lowered his high claim in order to meet Judaizing objections. He never said: 'Of course I am not circumcising these Gentiles. I am not adding them to Israel, but to the church. They are therefore being baptized into a proselyte status, but not added to the covenant people'. [12]

Instead, Paul said the exact opposite: 'For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh' (Phil. 3:3). Paul could say nothing else, because of his glorying in Christ Jesus. If Jesus is the true circumcision, the heir of all the promises of God, and if we by faith are united to Jesus, then in Christ we are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29).

3. The Church as a People: Spiritual Ethnics

The new Israel of God is not less a nation because it is spiritually constituted. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders who rejected him, 'The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit' (Mt. 21:43). Like Israel, the New Testament church is a theocracy, subject in all things to the word of the Lord. But unlike Israel of old, God's people are

no longer to bear the sword to bring God' s judgments on the heathen, nor to defend a territorial inheritance in the earth. Jesus commanded Peter to put away his sword, and declared to Pilate, ' My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place' (Jn. 18:36).

To this church Christ gives, not a sword, but the keys of the kingdom. The authority so sanctioned is not less, but greater than the power that the state exercises with the sword. Not temporal, but eternal judgments are pronounced in the name of Christ. Those who are judged by Christ' s word on earth are judged by that same word in heaven. On the other hand, penitent sinners who are welcomed in his name have heaven opened to them (Mt. 16:19; 18:18-20; Jn. 20:22, 23). It is because the church invokes eternal rather than temporal judgment that the sword cannot be its instrument. The day of judgment has not come, but the longsuffering grace of God is revealed. Although the sentence of the church is so solemn, it is not final. Church discipline is to be exercised with a view to the reclamation of the offender, as well as for the vindication of the name of Christ, and the holiness of his church (1 Cor. 5:5).

4. Church and State: the Power of the Sword

The sword that is given to the state is not that which is denied to the church. That is, we may not suppose that Christ denied to his apostles the right to bring in his kingdom with the sword, but conceded that right to Pilate. Pilate is a ruler. He has authority given to him by God (Jn. 19:11). But Roman power does not continue the theocratic authority that was Israel' s and which now passes in spiritual form to those who are the servants of Christ (' my officers' , v.36). Nor is the church denied the sword because its concerns are more limited: the conduct of public worship, for example. God' s kingdom of salvation is not administered in different departments, of which the church is one and the state another. To be sure, the new humanity in Christ is to serve him in all the spheres of human life. Christ is Lord of all; we must do all to the glory of God. But the church is the form that Christ has given to the people of God in the world. They may not reincorporate and take up the sword to anticipate his judgment or to see that God' s will is done on earth as in heaven. [13]

Worldly power, enforceable by the sword, is associated with territory. But the church is catholic, universal. It cannot be confined to any area nor defend boundaries. ' Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city which is to come' (Heb. 13:14). It is of the very nature of the New Testament church to be scattered among the nations of the world. We are pilgrims and strangers, the new *diaspora* of God. The relation of the church to the state therefore resembles that of Israel in dispersion. The exiles were warned by Jeremiah to realize that their captivity would be the length of a generation. They were not to look for a speedy return, but were to settle down in the land of their dispersion. ' Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper' (Je. 29:7). The words of the prophet are echoed by the Apostle. He exhorts Timothy to encourage prayer for kings and all in high place ' that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Tim. 2:2). He adds that this is acceptable to God, ' who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' . As

C. E. B. Cranfield has pointed out, such prayer is not only a Christian responsibility, but can even be said to have an evangelistic outcome. [14]

The church, then, may not use the sword, but it is not without a weapon. Paul says, ' The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God' (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit, and the truth of the gospel can accomplish what no sword can achieve, the turning of men' s hearts to God. The enemy of the church is the Devil and the spiritual hosts of wickedness. No sword can strike Satan but the sword of the Spirit.

The temptation to repeat the Crusades remains with the church. Others would create another Geneva, or gather another community in the wilderness, or perhaps even, one day, in literal world-flight, colonize another planet. Still others would seek to capture some political state and make it a new Israel, the earthly political form of the kingdom of God. It seems difficult to accept a calling for the state that is so limited: to preserve peace and order, to protect and support human life. Many rightly recognize that the expression of God' s saving kingdom must go beyond personal piety, and they look to the state (or to a new revolutionary order) to crush social evil and bring in divine justice. But the state is not called to bring in the kingdom, nor to enforce the rule of God' s absolute righteousness. Yet there stands another nation, the church of Jesus Christ, to be not only a witness and a refuge, but a *people* among whom the power of the kingdom is already at work, and Christ' s final salvation already realized. Until the church manifests in corporate form the meaning of the coming of the kingdom in the Spirit, its witness will be hindered. It will not appear as a city set upon a hill. Not only will it fail to manifest the social dimensions of God' s saving righteousness: it will diminish the gospel message that it seeks to proclaim.

5. The Fellowship of the Covenant

The church, then, is a ' new nation under God' , and the bonds that unite it are God-given. Clearly, God did not bring Israel out of Egypt to give them the opportunity to become acquainted with one another so that the social graces could flourish. He brought them to himself, and claimed them as his sons and daughters, so that their relation to one another might be grounded in their relation to him. Hittite treaties of the period required that vassals of the same suzerain refrain from hostilities against one another. [15] Certainly the servants of the Lord, joined in covenant with him, must live at peace with each other. But the God-centered character of covenantal religion required much more. Because God was the Father of Israel, the people were also a family, a ' fatherdom' (Eph. 3:14, 15). The electing love of God made Israel his people. They, in return, must not only love the Lord their God with heart and soul, they must also love their neighbour as themselves (Lv. 19:18). They are not free to enslave their brothers or sisters; they must not hate them in their heart (Lv. 25:35, 55; Dt. 15:12; Je. 34:8-22; Lv. 19:17). The underlying motive for that respect and affection was the joy of sharing together in the redeeming power and love of God. The Psalmist put it eloquently: ' I am a friend to all who fear you' (Ps119:63).

The Israelites were neighbours geographically because of their shared possession of the land of promise. Each man had his inheritance within the bounds of the tribal allotment, and the whole land was an inheritance received from the Lord. To belong to the people of God is to have a share in the inheritance (Dt. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27, 29; 18:1). The New Testament concept of 'fellowship' (*koinonia*) contains this same thought of sharing, of having in common the blessing, the inheritance given by God. God himself is the inheritance of Israel, the portion of his people (Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; La. 3:24).

The prophets denounced the sin of Israel in the breach of love within the family of God's people. Those who oppress the widow and the orphan or defraud their neighbours are not merely guilty of anti-social conduct. They have broken God's covenant. No one who hates his neighbour in his heart can rightly love God. The theme that John expounds in his First Epistle is firmly grounded in the Old Testament teaching regarding God's covenant with his chosen people.

Fellowship and Separation

There is another side to the coin. The bond that joins Israel to the Lord and to one another also separates them from the nations. The people of God are not to be numbered with the nations (Nu. 23:9). They are distinct religiously, for they are to serve the Lord, and no other God. He is their God, and they are his own possession, his inheritance, although all the earth is his (Ex. 19:5). They are also to be distinct morally. They must not practise the abominations of the heathen nations around them (Lv. 18:24-30). That ethical separation is symbolized in the ceremonial distinctiveness of Israel. The motif of cleanness and its opposite enforces the separation. Sources of uncleanness are not only forbidden foods, dead bodies, certain skin diseases, and bodily emissions, but also marital alliance with Gentiles (Ex. 34:12-17; 1 Ki. 11:2). The geographical separation of Israel gave practical support to the concept of Israel's distinctiveness.

In the New Testament the spiritual separation of the new people of God is heightened as the geographical and ceremonial forms of separation are fulfilled and transcended. No longer are the people of God to be barred from certain foods. In the cleansing of Christ's atonement, the ceremonial pictures are realized (Acts 10:9-16, 28; 1 Cor. 8:8; 10:23-27; 7:14). The removal of the dietary restrictions, and of the ceremonial sanctions that separated Jews from Gentiles – even more than the termination of the geographical distinctiveness of the new Israel – opened the door for the mission to the Gentiles. This was the evident effect of Peter's vision on the house-top in Joppa. He was freed to associate with the Gentile soldier Cornelius, to be a guest at his table, and also to baptize him into the membership of the church (Acts 10).

Yet the separation of the New Israel remains, and is intensified. Paul does not hesitate to use the language of separation from uncleanness in quoting from the Old Testament. 'Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty' (2 Cor. 6:17-18). The religious and moral separation of Israel now has a new depth. All defilement of flesh and spirit is to be cleansed away as the Christian church perfects holiness in the fear of

God (2 Cor. 7:1). The quest for holiness among the New Israel is both individual and corporate. Not only must each Christian pursue holiness: the church must grow together in the image of Christ, and must exclude from its fellowship those who are heretics or impenitent sinners (Rom. 16:17f.; 1 Cor. 5:9-13). Paul was concerned not only to present every man perfect in Christ (Col. 1:8), but also to present the whole church ' as a pure virgin to Christ' (2 Cor. 11:2). Christ sought a renewal of love from the church at Ephesus, but he commended them for exposing and bringing to trial false apostles. Other churches are warned of the danger of tolerating the Nicolaitan heresy (Rev. 2:2, 14, 20).

The overflowing love and grace of God radically renew the community of the covenant. The church that has been purchased with Christ' s blood cannot ask ' Who is my neighbour? With a view to limiting the circle of those to whom the love of compassion must be shown. Yet the love that reaches out in Christ' s name to the lost does not deny the reality of lostness. It calls men to enter the fellowship where the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, but the bond of that love can be forged only in union with Christ.

A City Set on a Hill

1. Israel's Calling before the Nations

God' s worshipping assembly, his chosen nation, is also a city set on a hill. As we have seen, God calls Israel to bear witness as well as to worship and to live in brotherhood. Israel is set before the nations to make known the saving work of the living God. The whole history of Israel is interwoven with its calling to witness. God' s judgments on Egypt in delivering the people from bondage are a memorable witness to his redeeming power (Ex. 9:16). So, too, will the conquest of the land manifest to the nations the power of God (Ex. 34:10). Israel did not enter the land as invaders, but as inheritors. On the one hand, Israel was commissioned by God to execute his judgment upon the wicked inhabitants. The Israelite incursion was providentially delayed until the iniquity of the Amorite and Canaanite inhabitants was ripe for judgment (Gn. 15:16; Lv. 18:24-30). God' s people were his avenging judges to bring the day of judgment, in a figure, on the rebellious inhabitants of the land. On the other hand, the land had been given by God to the descendants of Abraham; in the sight of the nations, Israel received her inheritance from God.

When Israel rebelled in the wilderness, Moses pleaded with God to withhold his judgment so that the Egyptians would not mock God' s deliverance (Dt. 9:28f.). Joshua made the same plea when Israel suffered defeat in Canaan: ' What will you do for your great name' ? (Jos. 7:9). When the kingdom had been established through the wars of David, Solomon constructed the temple. In his prayer of dedication, Solomon eloquently acknowledged the blessing to the nations that must flow from the place of God' s dwelling on earth. ' As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name – for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm. . . hear from heaven your dwelling place. . . so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel' (1 Ki. 8:41-43).

The Nations Share in Israel' s Blessing

The ingathering predicted in Solomon' s prayer did begin in his reign. Indeed, the blessing of wisdom that God granted to Solomon became the catalyst for that ingathering. A passage that describes the depth and breadth of the wisdom of Solomon concludes, ' Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon' s wisdom, sent by all the king of the world, who had heard of his wisdom' (I Ki. 4:34). The visit of the Queen of Sheba is described as a case in point. The Gentiles are drawn to the king of Israel, and to the God who so richly blessed him and his people (I Ki. 10:9). The gifts of the queen represent the freely brought tribute of the nations as they see what God has wrought among his chosen people.

2. Judgment and Blessing

From this zenith of blessing Israel rapidly drops into the nadir of apostasy and judgment. Solomon' s wisdom beomes folly, for he fails in faith. To gain security and peace for Israel, he trusts not in God, but in marital alliances with the heathen nations. He builds altars for the gods of his wives: Ashtoreth, Milcom, Molech, and Chemosh (I Ki. 11:1-8). Picture Solomon standing on the Mount of Olives, his back to the glory of the temple of the Lord, dedicating the high place he had built for Chemosh, the god of Moab!

God' s judgments begin. Solomon' s kingdom is divided; both Israel in the north and Judah in the south refuse the warnings of the prophets, and cause God' s name to be blasphemed among the nations because of their apostasy. Eventually both kingdoms are destroyed and the people carried into exile. Yet, even in the midst of judgment, God continues to make his name known among the nations. The very severity of his wrath against Israel is a sanctifying of his holy name, but God will also sanctify his name among the nations by delivering Israel, as he had done in Egypt (Ezk. 20:9, 14, 22, 39, 44; 36:20).

The Nations Blessed in Israel' s Judgment

Further, the nations are blessed in Israel' s judgment. When God withholds rain from Israel, his prophet Elijah becomes a blessing to a widow in Zarephath (1 Ki. 17; Lk. 4:26). Elisha heals Naaman, a Syrian general whose task it is to fight against Israel. He also prophesies that Hazael will be King of Syria, knowing well that this spells grief for Israel (2 Ki. 8:7-13). The most dramatic Old Testament account of how judgment on Israel brings blessing to the Gentiles is found in the prophecy of Jonah. Jonah' s reluctance to go to Nineveh is understandable. Nineveh, under Shalmanezar III, had already subdued Israel, and forced Jehu to pay tribute. [16] Jonah well knows that Nineveh is the great threat to the security of Israel. The message that God gives him is that in forty days Nineveh will be destroyed. God' s wrath is about to fall on that savage military power. Only Nineveh' s repentance can stop this judgment, and Jonah, knowing God' s mercy, fears that his call to reþtance may be all too effective (Jon. 4:2). Since Nineveh cannot hear without a preacher, Jonah flees the scene. He is willing to be accursed so

that Israel might be spared. But Jonah is taught that salvation is of the Lord, and that God has determined to bring the promised blessing to the Gentiles not only in spite of his judgment on Israel, but even through it. Jonah becomes a figure of the Servant of the Lord, raised from death to proclaim repentance to the nations.

Israel Blessed by Judgment on the Nations

On the other hand, the nations, too, must be judged. God uses the nations as his axe and saw to cut down the pride of Israel (Is. 10:5, 15). But the nations are not God's obedient servants in accomplishing his will. They trust in their own might, and worship their idols. Their arrogance will be punished. God will deliver the remnant of his people from their power. In the great day of his salvation he will again set his people free (Mi. 7:14-20; Is. 10:5-27; 63:1-6). As judgment on Israel brought blessing to the nations, so now judgment on the nations will bring blessing to Israel.

Blessing Shared: Israel and the Nations

This picture broadens to a vast eschatological horizon. Israel's blessing will be shared by the nations. A remnant of the nations will be saved with the remnant of Israel (Je. 48:47; 49:6, 39), and in that glorious day the enemy nations Egypt and Assyria will be God's chosen people along with Israel: 'Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance' (Is. 9:18-25).

Consummation Blessing: God Comes!

Such incredible blessing can be given only because God himself will come to bring his promises to fulfillment. The vision of the prophets sees the Lord coming in glory, delivering his people by a second exodus, and so filling his people with his glory that all the nations will be drawn at last to share in the blessing. The first covenant will be transcended in a new covenant, and God will make all things new (Is. 25:6-8; 40:1-11; Je. 31:31-34; Zc. 2:11-13; 12:8; 13:1; 14:20, 21; Zeph. 3:9).

The Psalms had celebrated God's dwelling in Zion, calling on the nations to join in the praises of the Lord (Ps. 57:9; 65:2; 67). With prophetic vision the psalmists also look forward to the day when a new song will be sung, when God himself will come and the trees of the field will sing for joy before him (Ps. 96:12, 13). In that day the peoples of the earth will be gathered to be the people of the God of Abraham (Ps. 47:9). The Lord will write the names of Babylonians, Philistines, Tyrians, Ethiopians among the citizens of Zion (Ps. 87).

God's coming is associated with the coming of the Messiah, through whom all these blessings will be brought. He will not only gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but will be a light to the nations, that they may see the salvation of God (Is. 42:6, 7; 49:6).

The witness of the people of God will be restored by the God of their salvation. He must come to deliver them and to make his promises of glory come true.

II. THE CHURCH AS THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

A. The Gathering Church of Christ

We have seen the Old Testament people of God first as a worshipping assembly, then as a holy people, and finally as a witness, a city set on a hill. As we turn to the new Covenant, we meet at once the witness and mission of Christ and of those whom he calls. We will first reflect on the witness of Christ' s church, then on its worship, and finally on its fellowship as Christ' s body.

1. *The Lord Comes to Gather*

' Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord' (Lk. 2:11). The herald angel announces to the shepherds the long-promised coming of the Lord. He is not only the Lord' s Anointed (Lk. 2:26); he is the anointed Lord, the glory of his people Israel (Lk. 2:32). His name is Jesus, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins (Mt. 1:21). The inspired witnesses present him in the Gospels as the Lord of creation, obeyed by winds and waves (Mt. 8:27). He is Master of life and death, of men and demons, with authority not only to heal the sick but to forgive sins (Mk. 2:8-11). He is more than a prophet, for he is the Son of God, the Word who became flesh and tabernacled among us so that we might behold his glory, the light that shines in the darkness (Mt. 16:16; Jn. 1:1-5, 14, 18).

He comes to earth on a mission from the Father, so that he might gather the remnant flock, the people given him of the Father (Lk. 12:32; Jn. 17:2; 10:27-29). He looks with compassion on the people as sheep scattered, without a shepherd (Mt. 9:36; 26:31). Ezekiel prophesied that the Divine shepherd would come to gather his flock and deliver them from the false shepherds (Ezk. 34). Jesus, the Good Shepherd, undertakes that task of gathering. Although he is the Lord, he is also the Servant. He comes as the Sent of the Father, not simply to call the unfaithful stewards of God' s kingdom to account (Mt. 21:37, 38), but also to summon sinners to the feast of the kingdom (Lk. 14:16-24; Mt. 22:2-14). He calls first the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 10:5; 15:24); when Gentiles come seeking him, he views their coming as a sign of his impending death and resurrection (Jn. 12:20-33). When he is lifted up, first to the cross, then in glory, he will draw all men unto him. The gathering work of Christ awaits the glory to be given him of the Father. The Lord who gathers calls his disciples to be gatherers with him. In a solemn saying, Jesus declares, ' He who does not gather with me scatters' (Mt. 12:30; Lk. 11:23). After the resurrection, Jesus calls and commissions his disciples to this gathering task. They are to be labourers in an abundant harvest, praying that the Lord will thrust forth yet more labourers (Mt. 9:37f.). They are to be fishers of men, called by the Lord who commanded them to thrust out into the deep, and who filled their nets to the bursting point with fish (Mt. 4:19; Lk. 5:10).

2. *The Church is Called to Gather*

Because Christ' s church is a missionary church, the order of the church serves the order to the church to make disciples of the nations. Under the dome of St. Peter' s in Rome are inscribed in Latin the words of Jesus to Peter: ' You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' (Mt.

16:18). It is not only the church of Rome that has emphasized the building of the church in an institutional sense to the detriment of the mission of the church to the world. It is for this reason, in part, that Ralph Winter has concluded that mission is the function of the church as sodality rather than modality. [17] The missionary orders rather than the ecclesiastical hierarchy promoted the mission of the church of Rome. Among the churches of the Reformation, mission societies rather than denominational organizations have carried the gospel to the ends of the earth. There is no disputing how often this has been the case, although Winter surely goes too far when he tries to represent the Apostle Paul and those who accompanied him as a kind of para-ecclesiastical missionary team. It is clear that Paul looked at the matter quite differently. He argued at length and with passion for his authority in the church as an apostle, and for his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. In relation to the order of the church, he could not have conceived of his work more centrally. He was fulfilling the gospel, bringing to fruit the promises of the Old Testament. Paul the Apostle was a wise master-builder of the church. Through his ministry, the Gentiles glorified God for his mercy. Paul uses formal language in describing his official ministry as Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:15-20).

The Apostolic, Missionary Church

Indeed, the fact that the apostolic office is both foundational and missionary has abiding significance for the church. The foundational aspect of the apostles' work was accomplished in the apostolic age. They were witnesses of the resurrection, who had seen with their own eyes the risen Lord (Acts 1:21, 22; 10:41, 42; 1 Cor. 15:8). They were organs of revelation, having received from the Lord what they delivered to the church (Eph. 3:4, 5; Heb. 2:3; 1 Cor. 15:3). But they were also missionaries, sent into the world with the only Name by which men can be saved. The Gospel of Matthew joins the foundational word of Jesus to the apostles (Mt. 16:18, 19), to the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20). Mission is not an addendum to the doctrine of the church. It is the calling of the church in the world. If it is neglected or abandoned, the life of the church, not just its work, is threatened.

The Father' s Missionary Love

The missionary character of Christ' s church does not issue only from the command of Christ. It flows from the revelation of the Father that Christ provided. He sends the disciples into the world as the Father sent him into the world (Jn. 17:18; 20:21). How did the Father send him? With authority, of course, but also in grace and love. In the teaching of Jesus, the astounding love of God is set forth. Jesus is the Beloved Son, but the Father has not spared him; instead he has sent him to give his life a ransom for many. In the parable of the welcoming Father, Jesus tells of the joy that his Father has in receiving lost sinners home again (Lk. 15:11-32). The story shows God' s amazing grace, for as the prodigal confesses – he does not deserve to be called the son of his father, or even to be made one of his servants. But the father receives him as a son and welcomes him with a feast. The older brother is furious because he knows well his brother' s sin, but does not know at all his father' s love. The key to the parable is the contrast between the older brother and Christ himself. Jesus told the story as one of three parables after he had been criticized for eating with publicans and sinners. In each story he shows the joy, and the feast, that accompanies the finding of the lost. ' There is joy in heaven

over one sinner who repents' (Lk. 15:7, 10). Jesus understands heaven's joy, and the love of the Father that rejoices in finding the lost. Jesus is the seeking shepherd of the first parable; he is like the woman of the second parable, who turned her house upside down to find a coin. The shepherd sought one sheep of a hundred, the woman one coin of ten; but the older brother would not seek one brother of one. In fact, not only did he fail to go to the far country to seek him, he even refused to eat with him when he came home. Not so Jesus. He, the true older brother, knows his Father's heart. He goes seeking publicans and sinners. He eats with them, and calls them to come home to the Father.

The gospel is the message of God's redeeming love in sending his own Son into the world. Those who understand that love will be driven to share it. They will not only rejoice to sit down with other redeemed sinners in heaven's feast: they will seek other sinners in Christ's name to call them home. As Christ was sent, so he sends them, and the dynamic of mission is the heart of the love of God. Again we see that mission is not an addendum. Rather, it is evidence that the church understands the gospel. The love that fulfils the law, as Jesus taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan, is the love of compassion, love modelled on the love of God.

Mission: Going Out and Coming In

The witness of Christ's church to the world is not expressed only in the going of Christ's disciples to the ends of the earth. The outgoing, centrifugal mission of the New Testament church does not simply replace the ingathering, centripetal movement of the Old Testament witness. The church is still a city set on a hill. Indeed, even its mission to other lands and cultures is a continuation of the task of calling the nations to worship at Mount Zion. The difference is that the Zion to which people are now called is the heavenly Zion, the Jerusalem above that is our mother (Gal. 4:26). Men and women of every tribe, tongue, people and nation are now called to join the heavenly worship described in Hebrews 12. Because we do not have a continuing city here, we can no longer call men to an earthly centre. Because we do have a continuing city above, our call goes to the whole world. The heavenly centre for the worship of the whole earth accounts for the mission to all the world. On the other hand, we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together on earth. Our local assemblies therefore become Mount Zion in miniature. Israel's calling to show to the world the holiness of the true people of God is maintained and deepened. Paul teaches this when he calls upon the church to 'Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe' (Phil. 2:14, 15). The Apostle uses language from Deuteronomy 32:5, but with an interesting reversal. Moses, dealing with the perpetual murmurings and questionings of Israel in the wilderness, described them as a perverse and crooked generation, corrupted and blemished. Paul urges the church to forsake the sins of the people of old and to be what Israel was not.

The holiness of the church is to be shown particularly in love for one another (Jn. 13:35). The world will be struck by the changed life-style of the Christian community, and will speak evil of it (1 Pet. 4:4). But the world cannot ignore that love that binds Christ's disciples together in a unity of heart (Jn. 17:23).

B. The Church as the Worshipping Assembly

The worshipping assembly of Christ becomes Mount Zion for those who are drawn in by seeing the lives and hearing the praises of those who know the Lord. Paul says of a wellordered service of worship that its prophetic ministry will fulfil Old Testament promises, for the stranger who enters will fall down on his face and say that ' God is among you indeed!' (1 Cor. 14:25; Is. 45:14; Zc. 8:22, 23).

Peter emphasizes the place of worship when he writes that ' you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Pet. 2:9). No doubt the praises of God serve as a witness to the nations. Yet praise to God is offered not for the sake of the Lord who is adored.

1. God's Glory Evokes Worship

All worship is qualified by the transcendent glory of God. The Psalms celebrate God' s glory in the works of his hands. The heavens thunder the glory of God' s power (Ps. 18:75; 19:1; 33; 147). God is also the Governor of men and nations, shaping history by his will (Ps. 145:13; 46:10). Above all God is to be praised for his work of salvation (Ps. 18; 145:7, 8, 18-21). His hills skipped like lambs when he led forth his people like a flock (Ps. 78:52; 114:4, 6). But the crescendo of praise builds toward the great work of salvation that God will do in the latter days. God will come and new songs of praise will be sung (Ps. 96:1, 11-13). Isaiah adds prophetic chorales praising the glory of God that will be revealed when all flesh shall see it together (Is. 40:5; 58:8; 59:19; 60:1).

Because worship praises the Lord himself, and does not simply celebrate his works, it moves from thanking God for what he has done to adoring him for who he is. The psalmists sing ' the glory due to his name' (Ps. 29:2). His mighty acts reveal his transcendent power and wisdom. We are called to marvel not only at his wisdom displayed in the cosmos and the ages, but at his wisdom in forming and knowing us personally (Ps. 139:1-18). Just as we praise God most for his deeds of salvation, so of all his attributes we are most overwhelmed by his saving love, the spring of our redemption. There is therefore a climactic and dramatic movement to our worship. Worship spirals upward from the works of God to the attributes of God, from his sovereignty in creation to his sovereignty in salvation. ' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever!' (Rom. 11:36).

2. God's Presence Evokes Worship

The supreme heightening of worship is evoked by the very presence of God. The angels who cry ' Holy, holy, holy!' are not reciting a litany, but are responding to the ever fresh and expanding revelation of the *presence* of God as it sweeps over them, wave upon wave. The climax of worship is always found in the immediate presence of the Lord. We have not only heard with our ears of his wonderful deeds and his glorious attributes; our eyes have seen him,

and with Job we repent in dust and ashes (Jb. 42:5, 6).

We have seen how central the presence of the Lord was for the worship of Israel: God must dwell in the midst; a way must be opened into his presence. The Psalmist longs for the courts of the Lord, not to enjoy the spectacle of worship, but to meet with God (Ps. 84; 63:1-3; 122:1). ' My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God' ? (Ps. 42:2).

3. *God' s Holiness Demands Exclusive Worship*

Because ' our God is a consuming fire' (Heb. 12:29), his own holy nature and will determine all of our worship. The Lord demands exclusive worship: ' Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God' (Ex. 20:5; 34:13). The forms, as well as the object, of our worship must be exclusive. God will not tolerate worship through idols, but insists that he be worshiped in the way that he has commanded (Dt. 12:30-32). All this is to say that worship is total commitment. It is nothing if not extravagant. To withhold anything is to fail to worship (Dt. 6:4-9).

4. *Fulfilment in Christ*

When we consider the church as the worshipping assembly of Jesus Christ, we see how all these biblical themes for worship are brought to fulfilment. Old Testament prophecy proclaims the great day of worship when the glory of God will be revealed. That climax comes with Jesus Christ. The works of God are manifested afresh in the miracles of Jesus. He shows his power over creation as Lord. But the wonder of worship overflows when the grace of God is revealed. The works and words of Jesus reveal the fulness of that grace. He glorifies the name of the Father as he is brought by the Father' s love for sinners to the cross. In Jesus Christ God comes and is present. The extravagance of Mary' s worship shows that she perceives his person as well as his work as he goes to Jerusalem to die (Jn. 12:1-8). Jesus shows his zeal for pure worship as he cleanses the temple, but he also announces that he is the true temple (Jn. 2:19-21). Worship in truth is worship of the Father in and through the Son.

The church with joyful worship hails Jesus Christ as Lord. Christians are designated as those who call upon his name (Acts 9:14). The church is the assembly of those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). This is a standard Old Testament expression for the worship of God (Gen. 4:26). The prayer ' Maranatha' , associated with the Lord' s Table, reflects the way in which the worship of the church centred on the future coming of the Lord in glory, as well as his presence in the Spirit (1 Cor. 16:22). [18]

The worship of the church is centred on God' s revelation in Christ in two ways. First the worshippers enter heaven itself, where Jesus is. The visions of the book of Revelation present the glory of the risen Lord who, with the Father and the Spirit, is the object of Christian worship. As we have seen, Hebrews 12 powerfully presents this access of worship. On the other hand, Christ is also present in the gathering on earth where two or three are gathered in his name (Mt. 18:20). The table fellowship of the upper room is continued with the risen Christ. The jealousy of God that demands exclusive worship now requires that we approach the Father only in and

through the Son. The church therefore gathers in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:4). The mercy-seat in the tabernacle remained empty. No image or likeness could be placed there, because that seat was reserved for the One who is the image of the invisible God (Co. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3).

Awareness of the presence of the Lord creates in the church a longing that surpasses that of the psalmist. The fellowship that hears his Word, celebrates the sacraments, and responds to his presence in praise has always marked the true church of Christ. The spiritual mystery of his presence was not heightened but lost in the doctrine of transubstantiation, making Christ physically present in the elements, rather than spiritually present among his people. Yet the reality of the spiritual presence of the Lord has also been lost in Protestantism when social crusades, self-improvement lectures, or camaraderie have crowded out worship.

C. The Body of Christ

Many figures are used for the church in the New Testament. It is pictured as a bride, a flock, a vine, a field, a temple. But Paul emphasizes a figure unique to his writing. The church is the body of Christ. In the Hellenistic world of the Apostle it was possible to speak of any organization as a body of people. Our term 'corporation' means just that: a group of people joined as one body by a legal fiction. But Paul speaks of the church, not as a body of people, but as the body of Christ. Evidently he is not simply saying that the church is a Christian corporation. Certainly we should not be surprised to find Paul joining Christ to the figure of the body. Every other figure for the church is related to Christ. If the church is a bride, Christ is the Bridegroom; if the church is a flock, Christ is the Shepherd; if the church is a temple, Christ is the Builder, the Foundation, or the Cornerstone. The figure of the vine makes the union of Christ and the church even more intimate. In the prophecy of Isaiah, God describes Israel as the vine he planted, 'the garden of his delight' (Is. 5:7). Jesus said to his disciples, 'I am the vine; you are the branches' (Jn. 15:5). Christians are joined together by being joined to Christ. They are a body because they are Christ's body.

1. Representative Union with Christ

To grasp the force of Paul's figure, we must recognize the extraordinary importance the physical body of Christ his Lord had for him. As Saul the Pharisee, persecuting the church, Paul was confronted on the road to Damascus by the risen Lord. He became a preacher of Christ and the resurrection (Acts 17:18). In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he strongly opposed the Greek denial of the resurrection of the body. When he wrote to the church at Philippi, he said of Christ that he 'will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Phil. 3:21)–the body he had seen on the Damascus road.

Christ's Body on the Cross

But it is not only the risen body of Christ that is important for Paul. Even more frequently he speaks about the crucified body of Christ. In Colossians 1:22 he tells of our 'being reconciled by

Christ's physical body through death'. In Romans 7:4 he says that we have 'died to the law through the body of Christ'. As Peter puts it, Christ 'bore our sins in his body on the tree' (1 Pet. 2:24). Our sins deserve the death penalty, but the penalty was paid by Christ who died in our place. Paul reflects profoundly on the representative union with Christ that causes his death to have a saving outcome for us. So closely does he identify the figurative with the literal body of Christ that it is sometimes difficult to say which he has in view. In Ephesians 2, for example, Paul writes that Christ in his death broke down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, that he might 'reconcile both of them to God through the cross'(Eph. 2:16). Does 'one body' here mean the one body of the church, into which Jews and Gentiles are joined as they are made one new man (v. 15)? Or does 'one body' mean the one body of Christ on the cross by which they are reconciled ('in the blood of Christ', v. 13)? Either interpretation is faithful to Paul's thought. The unity of the church as Christ's body rests on the unity of the body of Christ on the cross. The church is one body in Christ (Rom. 12:5); it is a body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27); it is the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

Representation: the Church not a ' Continuing Incarnation'

This closeness of identification does not mean that Paul is caught in a naive or mystical realism in which he cannot distinguish between the physical body of Christ and the figure of the body applied to the church. Even less does Paul think that Christ died in the body of his flesh, to be raised in the body of the church. Paul does not think of the church as continuing the incarnation. Paul did, after all, see the risen body of the living Lord. He was told, to be sure, that in persecuting the church he was persecuting Christ, but he never imagined that he saw the church on the road to Damascus. [19] On the contrary, nothing is more fundamental for Paul's thought than the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection sealed the finished work of Christ with divine approval; he was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). But more than that: in both his death and his resurrection, Jesus represented those who are united to him. The identification that Paul sees between Christ and the church is first of all representative.

The Parallel with Adam

The Apostle makes this clear by the parallel that is established between the first and second Adam (Rom. 5:1-21; 1 Cor. 15:22). When Adam sinned, all men sinned in him, and death, the penalty of sin, passed upon all men (Rom. 5:12). Those who are in Christ are related to the Head of the new humanity in the same representative way. When Christ died, they died; when he rose from the dead, they rose with him, and are now in the heavenly places because Christ is there as their great Representative (Rom. 4:25; 6:8, 9; Col. 2:20; 3:1; Eph. 1:3).

Covenantal Headship

The background of Paul's concept of forensic representation is in the covenantal headship of the Old Testament. God makes his covenant with Abraham and with his seed after him (Gen. 12:3; 18:18). God redeems Israel to fulfil the promises he had made to their fathers (Ex. 3:6, 15; Deut. 7:8). The tribes of Israel are blessed in their fathers (Gn. 49). The prophets, priests, and

kings that God raises up serve as mediators of God' s covenant, representing the people before God, as well as representing God to the people. Israel is called to be God' s servant, but Moses also is the servant of the Lord: Israel trusts in the Lord and in his servant Moses (Ex. 14:31). Representative headship is strongly presented in the figure of the suffering Servant in Isaiah. The Servant of the Lord is distinct from Israel, yet can be identified with Israel (Is. 49:3, 5, 6). Because he is the Representative in whom God' s covenant is fulfilled, his sufferings are vicarious and redemptive (Is. 53).

It is the concept of covenantal headship that leads Paul to speak of Christ as the Head, and the body as his members. Paul does not think of Christ the Head as constituting only the top member of the body. This is clear from the fact that when Paul speaks of the members of the body he includes ear, eye, and nose (1 Cor. 12:16-21). It is also clear from the fact that Paul uses headship in a way distinct from the body figure. His usage is shaped by the Greek Old Testament, where *kephale* is associated with *arche* in translating the Hebrew *rosh*. Primacy, origination, honor, authority, and summation are signified by headship in the Old Testament. [20] In this sense Paul speaks of the husband as the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church. Christ is the Head of every man (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:25-32; 1 Cor. 11:3). Christ is the Head of the principalities and powers (Col. 1:22), and has universal dominion as the head of the church (Eph. 1:20-23). Paul thinks of the church as a body in terms of one whole new man in Christ, or, alternatively, as the bride of Christ, springing from him as Eve was taken from the body of Adam, and united to him as a wife to her husband (Eph. 1:15; 5:23-32). We would distort Paul' s figure beyond recognition were we to speak of Christ as a head, helpless without a body. The body of Christ is not to be divided at the neck! Even when the two figures are put side by side, as in Ephesians 4:15,16, the distinction remains. We are not to suppose that Paul is imagining a strange physiology by which the body grows up into the head and is nourished by it.

2. Vital Union

When Paul speaks of our union with Christ, representative union is always in view. Because Christ died, we died. Our death in Christ has paid the penalty of sin and freed us from the chains of sin. Because Christ rose, we rose, and we now enjoy the freedom of new life in Christ. But while this representative relation is always in view, Paul' s understanding of our union with Christ is richer than forensic relation.

Paul' s Phrase ' In Christ'

This is apparent from Paul' s use of the phrase ' in Christ' . On the one hand, Paul speaks of our being ' in Christ' representatively. When Paul writes, ' Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1), he is referring to the representative relation that he has been expounding. ' In Christ' also refers to the representative status of believers in passages that speak of God' s saving action or gift to us in Christ (e.g. Eph. 1:3, 6, 11; 2:13, 14; 4:32; Rom. 6:23; Gal. 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21). This is true also of passages that use ' in Christ' to designate believers as they sustain a saving relation to Christ (e.g. Phil. 1:14; 3:9; 4:21; Rom. 16:7, 11; 1 Cor. 1:30). But in other passages the phrase carries a fuller meaning. Paul speaks of ' the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thes. 1:1).

Unless Paul meant more than simply a representative union with Christ, he could not have joined the Father to Christ in the same phrase. Because we are united to Christ, we are not only in Christ representatively, but also vitally. Christ is in us by the presence of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:10, 11). The resurrection life of Christ is not only reckoned to our account, it is a living power transforming our existence. We grow up into Christ (Eph. 4:12-16; Col. 2:6, 7), being conformed to his image (Rom. 8:29). Christ gave his body once for all on the cross; in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we remember his sacrifice. As we commune with him in the sacrament, however, we also feed upon him spiritually by faith, and our living fellowship with him is sustained (1 Cor. 11:24-29; cf. 1 Cor. 12:13).

This vital union 'in Christ' is mystical in the sense that it far surpasses the relation possible between finite persons, yet it is not an impersonal mysticism. We are not immersed in Christ as in the air that we breathe. We misunderstand Paul's language if we think of our vital union with Christ in spatial terms. [21] Yet Paul does use the language of the temple to describe Christ's dwelling with (in) us, and moves easily to the figure of our dwelling in him as the other side of the personal communion that his indwelling represents (Col. 1:27, 28; 2:9f.).

Fellowship in Union with Christ

Paul's concept of the body of Christ is drawn from his doctrine of our union with Christ. For that reason the fellowship of the body is a sharing together in fellowship with Christ. The fundamental idea expressed in *koinonia* is not the link that joins Christians to each other, but the common bond that unites them to Christ. [22]

At the same time, union with Christ does bind Christians together by the ties of the Spirit. By our union with Christ, we are united to each other. The image of the body is a happy one for this purpose, since it presents a unity that is organic. An organism manifests unity in diversity, and Paul makes powerful use of this metaphor. As an organism, the church is one body. When party strife threatened to divide the church at Corinth under the names of ministers of the gospel who had laboured there, Paul cried out in anguish of heart, 'Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?' (1 Cor. 1:13). The church of Christ cannot be divided by following human leaders, for the church is one: one in Christ's body on the cross. That oneness is symbolized at the Lord's Table: 'We, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (1 Cor. 10:17).

Making Church Unity Evident

The unity of the body of Christ is to be evident on earth. To declare oneself to be a follower of Apollos rather than Paul, or of Paul rather than Peter, is to deny the unity of the body. The lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance in love that are the fruits of the Spirit enable us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The mere fact that the church has been divided denominationally does not justify such division. A flat denial that division exists will not help; neither is it a solution to start with a clean slate, as it were, and to create yet another division in the church by establishing a group that will not be followers of Peter, Paul or Apollos, but simply of Christ (1 Cor. 1:12). Another expedient is to declare one denomination to be the true church of Christ, and all others apostate or schismatic. Such efforts

have succeeded only in creating further division, yet they begin from a proper premise. They rightly assume that the church should be one, not just in heaven, but on earth. When the unity that we are zealously to maintain has been broken, we cannot ignore the calamity, but must set about seeking to restore the broken fellowship. We cannot ignore deep and serious doctrinal differences. Neither can we ignore false teaching, and unite a church that is indifferent to creed, or even committed to denying the need for doctrinal discipline. The path to restoring unity requires discipline along with patient instruction and loving admonition. We are not without direction on this path. The writings of the New Testament provide us with an inspired model of how unity in the Spirit is to be sought.

3. Individual and Corporate Unity with Christ

The model of the body assumes that our relation to Christ is both individual and corporate. If the individual relationship did not exist, the differing gifts that make up the body would not appear. The individual saints are chosen and called of God. They have been saved by faith, and their faith stands in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:5). Salvation is an individual experience: 'The man who loves God is known by God' (1 Cor. 8:3). The same affirmations that are made about the church as the body of Christ are also made about the individual Christian. He, too, is a holy temple (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 5:1); that temple may be defiled by one member (1 Cor. 6:15). The Christian is joined to Christ, as is the church (1 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:28; Eph. 5:22-23; 2 Cor. 11:2).

On the other hand, just as there is no salvation apart from Christ, so there is no salvation that does not join us to one another as members of his body. The sanctified in Christ Jesus at Corinth make up the church of God at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2). Divisions among the saints imply that Christ can be divided (1 Cor. 1:3). There is one Christ; apostles and teachers are his servants, called by him and endowed with gifts of his Spirit (1 Cor. 3:5). There is one church – Christ's church; apostles and teachers are given to the church as stewards of Christ (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

If the church may not be divided by the diversity of its leaders, neither may it be divided by the diverse gifts of its members. The organic figure of the body shows that diversity does not produce division, but unity. Not only do the gifts proceed from one Giver; they are also interdependent. The interdependence applies to both the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit and the benefit from such ministry. If a church had only teachers, the absence of ministries of order and mercy would soon destroy the one-sided fellowship. The body is not composed entirely of the tongue. All ministry in the body is therefore team ministry. We serve together as we minister to one another.

On the other hand, those who receive the ministry of others depend upon the gifts of others for their growth. Growth in Christ must take place in the church of Christ, for it is in the body of Christ that the nurturing gifts are exercised. Christian life 'in Christ' is in the body of Christ. Indeed, the steward of Christ's gifts grows through exercising his stewardship just as the recipient of his ministry grows through receiving it. To deny to a brother or sister the ministry of grace given to one is to be an unfaithful steward of the manifold mercies of God (1 Pet. 4:10). In such ministry, pride cannot say that it has no need of the humblest of ministries, nor can envy

refuse to perform the lowliest of tasks (1 Cor. 12:4-31).

III. THE CHURCH AS THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Worshipping in the Spirit

In some countries of the world, the church may seem to bear a close resemblance to Ezekiel' s vision. Critics picture the church as a dead remainder of another age, the age of faith. They assume that the church survives in a post-Christian society only until its elderly members are laid to rest and its ancient buildings are torn down or converted into museums. For believers too, the lament of Israel seems sadly appropriate, ' Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off' (Ezekiel 37:11).

Ezekiel' s vision, however, is not a picture of despair, but of hope. At the command of God Ezekiel prophesies to the dry bones in the valley. There is a thundering earthquake, and the bones are brought together. Again Ezekiel prophesies and the Spirit of God breathes life in the valley of death.

The church that is the people of God and the body of Christ is also the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Spirit the church can be only an institutional sepulchre organizing the bones of dead men. Indeed, it may organize those bones in surprising ways: in the ecclesiastical catacombs of Lima, Peru, the bones are classified not in skeletons, but by bones!

The vision God gave to Ezekiel is not just a passing image of the contrast between human deadness and the life-giving Spirit of God. No, it presents the central promise of the prophets: God himself will come to bring life from death. In Ezekiel' s vision, God' s coming is in the outbreathing of his Spirit.

1. *The Spirit of the Lord*

God' s covenant promise is ' I will be your God, and you shall be my people' (Lv. 26:12). That relation means that God claims his people for himself. They become his heritage, his precious possession (Ex. 34:9; Dt. 4:20; Ps. 33:12; Ex. 19:5; 1 Pet. 2:9). It also means that God graciously gives to his people a claim upon himself. He is their God. Christ comes to fulfil the covenant promise. He comes as Lord, to claim for himself the people of God, those that have been given to him by the Father (Jn. 17:2; 15:19). He also comes as the Servant, to be identified with his disciples, and to give himself, not only for them, but also to them. Union with Christ becomes the great theme of the Apostle Paul.

The relation of the Spirit to the church must be understood in the same way. The Spirit is Lord: the coming of the Spirit is the coming of the Lord; the presence of the Spirit is the presence of the Lord. As Lord, the Spirit claims the people of God as his own. But the Spirit also comes so that God' s people might possess God as their own. The Spirit seals the relation between God

and his people from both sides. In the Spirit God seals his inheritance: his possession of his people. In the Spirit we have the seal of our inheritance: possessing the Spirit, we possess God himself, our Saviour (Eph. 1:13, 14).

2. The Spirit as Possessor

It is the presence of God in the Spirit that forms the church as the worshipping assembly. If we think only of the gifts of the Spirit to be used in worship and neglect the *presence* of the Spirit, we shall lose from view the very reality that makes worship to be worship: the presence of the Lord. The great event described in Acts 2 is the epiphany of the Holy Spirit. James Dunn has pointed out that just as the first chapter of Luke's Gospel prepares for the coming of the Son in chapter two, so does the first chapter of Acts prepare for the coming of the Spirit in chapter two. [23] Indeed, the ministry of Jesus has an aspect of preparation as well as of fulfilment. The coming of the Spirit is the promise of the Father which the disciples are to await in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). Jesus promised that he would not leave the disciples orphaned, but would come to them (Jn. 14:18). It is better for them that he should leave them in the body of his incarnation in order that he might come again in the power of his Spirit (Jn. 16:7). At Pentecost, Jesus both comes in the Spirit and baptizes with the Spirit. The presence of the Lord the Giver and the enduing of his Gift are not in conflict. In the wonder of worship that crowns our relation to God, we possess him as we adore him.

Pentecost: Continuity and Newness

Pentecost is the coming of the Lord, the Spirit, to fill his temple, and so it marks both the *continuity* and the *newness* of the church. Like Sinai, Pentecost manifests the presence of God in the flame of fire. The promise of the Father is being fulfilled. As Peter says, this is the promise of the covenant: 'The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call' (Acts 2:39). Paul identifies the promise of the Spirit with the promise made to Abraham. The blessing promised to Abraham is fulfilled in the coming of the Spirit (Galatians 3:14).

Yet, while Pentecost must be understood in continuity with the promise of the old covenant, it is continuity in fulfilment. The epiphany of the Spirit fills the church of the new covenant with the presence of God. The Christian church is a Holy Spiritual church. After Pentecost, we cannot think of the church in merely Old Testament categories. The church is still the people of God, but it is the Spirit-filled people of God of the latter days. The church is still the disciples of Christ, but disciples who have their Lord in their midst and in their hearts by his coming in the Spirit. Of course, even to say that the church is still the people of God is not enough. Only by the coming of the Spirit is the full meaning of Israel's calling displayed. The new covenant does not destroy, it fulfils; it brings to realization the calling of the Father and the Son.

Fulfilment at the Feast of the First-Fruits

At the command of Jesus, the disciples remained in Jerusalem until the feast of Pentecost. In the divine plan it is appropriate that the coming of the Spirit should be in the setting of the feast

of the first-fruits at Jerusalem. Jesus had fulfilled the Passover in the offering of himself; the great harvest ingathering could now begin. Further, the feasts prescribed in the law summoned all God' s people to appear before him and to praise his name before the peoples of the world. In Jewish tradition, as early as the writing of the *Book of Jubilees*, Pentecost was associated with the giving of the law at Sinai. [24] Israel came to Sinai in the third month after the Passover, when she left Egypt (Exodus 19:1). It was assumed that this period was equivalent to the fifty days between the Passover and Pentecost, and that the law was given on Pentecost. The *Book of Jubilees* makes Pentecost the time of covenant renewal for Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Jubilees* adds that it was then forgotten until renewed again at Sinai. In any case, this feast at Jerusalem marks the great day of covenant renewal for the disciples. They are gathered together when the rush of a great wind is heard and tongues of fire divide to rest upon them. The outward phenomena link the epiphany of the Spirit at Pentecost with the whirlwind, the fire, and the earthquake of the divine epiphany at Sinai (Acts 2:1-3; cf. 4:31; Ex. 19:18; 20:18; 1Ki. 19:11-12).

Repentance, Covenant Renewal and Praise

As is fitting when the Lord manifests his power and glory, the people are called to repentance and faith. Peter' s sermon summons the men of Israel to repent of the crime of the crucifixion, and to acknowledge their Messianic King, now raised to heavenly glory. The coming of the Spirit is the fulfilment of the renewal of the covenant that the prophets have promised. The coming of the Lord in power calls forth praise from the disciples. The gift of tongues by which they can utter their praises is not, of course, that which evokes praise. They are enabled to express their praises in the languages of the many pilgrims gathered at Jerusalem. But they are not praising simply because they *can* praise in languages other than their own. They are praising the Lord because he has come. The greatness and goodness of their God and Father, of their risen Lord and Saviour are made known to them. Peter' s sermon clearly shows what the subject of his praise had been: the glory of his risen Lord. The Spirit who came from the throne filled the hearts of the disciples with knowledge of heaven' s Lord.

In Luke' s account, the missionary implications of Pentecost are clear. In their diverse languages the pilgrims in Jerusalem hear the mighty works of God wrought in Jesus Christ. The curse of the tower of Babel is reversed in the outpouring of the Spirit. But the implications for the worship of the church are equally evident. When God comes in the Spirit, the response is corporate praise.

As we have seen, God is worshipped for what he has done, and for who he is. That worship is elicited and intensified by the awareness of the immediate presence of God. As the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost they were moved to praise God for his mighty works (Acts 2:11). These are, of course, his mighty acts of salvation in Christ, culminating in the resurrection and the ascension. The presence of the Spirit opened the hearts of the disciples to recognize the actuality and significance of the things that they had seen and heard, and of which they were witnesses. A change was wrought in their consciousness; yet it was not such as to focus their attention on themselves, but on the Lord. Peter does not preach his transformed consciousness, but the truth that his transformed consciousness clearly perceived: the risen

glory of Christ, and, therefore, the need of his hearers to repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of Christ so that they, too, might praise him in the joy of the Spirit.

The Filling of the Spirit

At Pentecost the Spirit comes to abide, to dwell in the midst of the new people of God. The house is filled with the wind of the Spirit (Acts 2:2) as a sign that the church, the house of God, is filled with the Spirit. If Pentecost is the coming of the Spirit, a coming in which God the Father and Christ the Son also come to dwell in the temple of living stones, then how can impersonal figures be used to describe the coming of the Spirit? The term 'filling' can describe the movement of the wind or of water filling a vessel, but how can it be applied to a personal presence? Jesus compared the Spirit to the wind when he spoke with Nicodemus (Jn. 3:8); he likened it to water when he spoke to the Samaritan woman, and when he called temple worshippers to himself (Jn. 4:13, 24; 7:38, 39). Jesus was to baptize with the Spirit and with fire (Mt. 3:11); when he was baptized, the Spirit descended upon him as a dove (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:32).

Such figurative terms do not deny the personal presence of God in the Spirit. Rudolf Bultmann uses unfortunate language when he speaks of the Holy Spirit being conceived of in the New Testament both animistically and dynamistically. [25] But it is true that the Spirit is presented both as the Giver and the Gift. The key to understanding the ministry of the Spirit in the church is to hold together both aspects of his presence: not to forget that even when we speak of the power and enabling of the Spirit in figurative terms, we are describing the work of a Person. The figure of the Spirit as a wind filling the house suggests the overwhelming power of the Spirit's presence, driving out everything else and taking complete possession of the disciples (and, in this case, their entire environment). So, too, the possession of the Spirit can be compared to the overmastering influence of wine (Eph. 5:18). Another contrast is also suggested. The possession of the Holy Spirit may be contrasted with demon possession. The mastery that an evil spirit may have over a man can be only at the expense of his own liberty and manhood. The Gerasene demoniac healed by Jesus was a man who had been brutalized and depersonalized by demonic power (Lk. 8:26-39). Possession by the Spirit has the opposite result. Since the possessing Spirit is the Creator Spirit, his presence does not bring destruction or suppression, but fulfilment and affirmation. The filling of the Spirit is not the invasion of an alien power, but the infusion of the life-giving presence of the Creator who has come as Redeemer.

Filling of Christ and the Father

That the figure of filling does not diminish the personal presence of the Spirit is also clear from the fact that the same figure is also used of the presence of Christ and of the Father. Christ not only fills all things by his divine power (Eph. 1:23; 4:10); he also fills the church in a special sense, for the church is his body, 'the fulness of him who fills everything in every way' (Eph. 1:23). So, too, the Father fills the church. Paul prays for the church that it might be 'filled to the measure of all the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:19). Clearly, the filling of the Spirit, of Christ, of the Father, are not different things. To be filled with the Spirit means to 'know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (Eph. 3:19); it means to have Christ present in one's heart and life. By the

coming of the Spirit, the church becomes the church where Christ is present. If the triune personality of God's presence is lost from view, there is danger that the figures for the Spirit's power will be misunderstood and abused. The error of Simon Magus then begins to emerge (Acts 8:9-24). We may erroneously think of the Spirit only as a power, like electricity, perhaps. We may seek the gifts of the Spirit for their own sake rather than for the fellowship with God that they manifest. Jesus was filled with the Spirit in his ministry, and as James Dunn has well said, 'the Spirit filled us with Jesus'. [26]

3. The Spirit as Possessed: Gifts of the Spirit in Worship

The gifts of the Spirit, then, must not be abstracted from the Spirit who gives them. We need to appreciate, however, the New Testament emphasis on the rich abundance of gifts that the Spirit provides for worship, and particularly for the corporate worship of the people of God. Proclamation of the Word of God, prayer, singing of the praises of God, offering ourselves to God, along with the ministry of our possessions: all these elements of worship are enabled by gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:28; 14:1, 6, 14, 15; 2 Cor. 9:12; Rom. 12:1, 2; 15:16; 1 Pet. 4:9-11). The Corinthian church, as Paul put it rather ironically, did not fall behind any church in the possession of spiritual gifts. The church was the fruit of Paul's ministry and the 'signs of an apostle' continued to be manifest whenever the church met for worship (2 Cor. 12:12-13). The worship of the Corinthian church, however, for all of the miraculous gifts that were evident, was not different in character from the worship of other churches less markedly endowed. The miraculous gifts were the heightening of gifts of the Spirit given to all the church of Christ in every age and circumstance. The ministry of the Word need not be the inspired ministry of an apostle or prophet to be carried out by the charism of the Spirit. Paul prays for the Colossians, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will 'through all spiritual wisdom and understanding' (Col. 1:9). This is not to ask that they all be made prophets, but that they be enriched in their understanding of how the Word of God was to be wrought out in their walk of obedience. So, later in the Epistle, Paul says, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God' (Col. 3:16). Under the blessing of the Spirit the richly indwelling word of Christ would yield spiritual wisdom, wisdom that would find expression in songs of worship pleasing to God and edifying to the saints. [27]

We may fully recognize the extraordinary character of the gifts of the Spirit in Corinthian worship. Presumably, if a member of that church 'had a psalm' (1 Cor. 14:26), he or she had it by revelation of the Spirit; it was an inspired utterance. But the charisms, the gifts of the Spirit for worship are not limited to the Corinthian phenomena. It would undercut the worship of the church to fail to understand the illuminating work of the Spirit, granting the gifts of teaching, praise, ordering and caring that must mark the corporate devotion of those who have been gathered by the Spirit into the presence of the Lord. It is in the Spirit that the church is 'built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 2:5). No greater gift for our worship can be found, however, than the gift of the Spirit's intercession for us. At best, we do not know what or how to pray in accordance with the perfect purpose and will of God, but the Spirit intercedes for us, and in us, with groanings that go beyond words. [28]

B. Nurture in the Spirit

1. The Spirit's Work of Edification

The indwelling of the Spirit of God requires holiness of the church as his temple (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1). That holiness is achieved by the Spirit's sanctifying work, in which he not only cleanses and renews the inward life of believers (Ezk. 36:27), but also uses the communion of the saints to minister to one another (1 Pet. 4:10). The figure of the erection of a building is often used to describe the development of the church in maturity and holiness. This figure has a strong Old Testament background. The building of the people of God is a term for his blessing. It is used in parallel with planting, and both have their opposites in figures of judgment: tearing down and plucking up (Je. 24:6). Israel was judged of the Lord for sin; the house of the Lord was torn down. But through the prophets came the promise of the rebuilding of the house of David (Am. 9:11), and of the temple (Ezk. 40:48). 'The concept of up building thus becomes a symbol of the gracious dealings of God with the remnant of his people, and is found in this sense in later Judaism's expectation for the future.' [29]

Paul shows how closely the thought of building is linked with that of the temple. Jesus Christ, rejected of the builders, is the chief Cornerstone 'in whom the whole building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2:21).

The organic figure of growth and the architectural figure of construction are blended together in those words of the apostle, just as planting and building are used together in the Old Testament. Paul speaks of himself and Apollos as fellow labourers. Paul plants and Apollos waters (1 Cor. 3:6). Alternatively, they can be thought of as builders. Paul works as a master builder, laying the foundation. Other builders add to the structure: they are warned to build in gold, silver, and precious stones, not wood, hay, or stubble (1 Cor. 3:10-15; Rom. 15:20). But while there are many farmers and builders working together, they are all in God's service. The church is *God's* silled land, *God's* building (1 Cor. 3:9).

God the Source of Nurture

A number of major lessons about the development of the church are drawn from the twin figures of building and growing. One is that God is the source of the nurture of the church. Specifically, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to nurture the church as the body of Christ. God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:7), and God gives it through the Spirit who gives life to the body and holiness to the temple (1 Cor. 3:9; cf. 3:16; Eph. 3:16-19).

Growth Is Corporate

A second major principle is that growth is corporate. The temple grows as a structure, composed of living stones. It is rare to find the concept of building, of 'edification', used in application to the individual believer (as it is in 1 Cor. 14:4). The same is true of the growth figure in the image of the body. The body grows as a unity; individual members function for the development of the whole body (Eph. 4:11-16). The mature man of full stature is the one new

man in Christ, not first the individual believer.

Growth through Mutual Ministry

This leads to a third principle: that growth takes place through the ministry of the members of the body to one another. Every member of the body becomes a 'joint of supply' to contribute to the upbuilding of the whole (Eph. 4:16). The work of the Spirit is therefore not only internal within every believer, providing the fruits of the Spirit that conform the individual to the image of Christ; the work of the Spirit is also to provide the gifts of the Spirit for ministry, so that the members of the body can minister to one another. Since these gifts of the Spirit are varied and of varying importance for the growth of the body, another implication follows: there are those who have special callings to be builders and horticulturalists. Not all are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers. Some Christians carry major responsibility for the ministry of edification because of the gifts they have received (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:8; Eph. 4:11, 12).

Growth Is Gradual

A fourth principle that appears in the use of these figures is that growth is gradual. Paul labours unceasingly to present every man perfect in Christ (Col. 1:28), and to present the church corporately as 'a pure virgin to Christ' (2 Cor. 11:2). Sanctification is not instantaneous and complete. The holiness of the church must be zealously defended and advanced. As Israel was led through the wilderness to be tested and proved, so the Spirit guides the New Testament church along a life-curriculum of testing and growth. When Jesus was baptized and filled with the Spirit for his ministry, the Spirit led him into the wilderness. The power and blessing of the Spirit does not remove us from the world but leads us in a programme of growth through trial.

The Centrality of Christ for Nurture

A final principle that is emphatic in these figures takes us back to the first: it is the centrality of Jesus Christ for the church. Christ is the Builder, the Foundation, the Cornerstone; his is the body; he is the Vine, and the disciples are the branches. The gifts and nurture of the Spirit are given in the body of Christ.

As we have seen, the church is missionary in its nature, and the upbuilding of the church, too, includes outreach as well as inward development. Paul uses the figure of the olive tree to describe the ingrafting of the Gentiles into the people of God (Rom. 11:17-24). He describes his own far-flung ministry as laying a foundation where none has been laid (Rom. 15:20). The gospel bears fruit and increases, just as Christians bear fruit and increase (Col. 1:6, 10). The emphasis of the figures of building and growth, however, is on the inward edification of the church as the body of Christ.

2. Nurturing by the Spirit of Life

The up building of the church in the Spirit flows from the nature of the Spirit as the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2), and the Spirit of Truth (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 1 Jn. 4:6; 5:7). In the Old Testament

man is given life by the divine inbreathing. The *ruach*, the breath or Spirit of God, is not an additive, provided to add rationality to a living animal; no, the Spirit that gives man life makes him to be *man* in the image of God (Gen. 2:7). In his vision of the valley of dry bones, Ezekiel saw God breathe new spiritual life in a people devoid of life or hope (Ezk. 37:5, 9, 10, 14). Jesus accordingly teaches Nicodemus that entry into the kingdom is by the new birth, the giving of life by the Spirit, who moves with sovereign mystery like the wind (John 3:3-8). After his resurrection, Jesus breathed upon the disciples, and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (Jn. 20:22). Paul continually associates the Spirit with the resurrection of Christ (e.g. Rom. 1:4). He recalls the Genesis passage when the first Adam received life by the breath of God and compares it to the resurrection life of Christ: 'So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit' (1 Cor. 15:45).

Apart from the life-giving power of the Spirit, the church remains an empty shell, whatever its form or verbal profession. Paul answers the critics of his doctrine of justification by faith by affirming the new life in the Spirit of those who have been united to Christ (Romans 6:1-11; 8:1-17). The life of the Spirit bears fruit in the Christian graces (Gal. 5:22-24). By the Spirit the love of God is poured out in our hearts: the love in which the Father did not withhold his only Son, but delivered him up for us all (Rom. 5:5, 8; 8:32). The life given by the Spirit is not a mere feeling, but a new realm of existence in relationship to God. Love is the first of the fruits of the Spirit, and the New Testament constantly describes the love for God and for neighbour that fulfils the law. In the church of Christ, life together manifests a love that the world does not know, a love modelled on that love of God imparted by the Spirit. The unity of the church is forged by sharing in the Spirit, and in the love of the Spirit. Paul joins the fellowship or sharing of the Spirit with the encouragement of love, and with tender mercy and compassion (Phil. 2:1). The lowliness of mind that enables Christians to think of the concerns of others before their own is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ, who humbled himself to become obedient to the death of the cross. The life of the Spirit has the power of Christ's resurrection, the power of eternal life already begun (Rom. 8:11; Jn. 4:14; 7:37-39). The Spirit is the Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14). But the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ's glory, glory that he entered by way of the cross. Its precisely in and through suffering that the power of the Spirit becomes manifest (note the context of 1 Peter 4:14). Paul's description of the power and joy of the life of the Spirit leads him to turn again to the theme of suffering. The final triumph is that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. 8).

3. The Nurture of the Spirit of Truth

The Spirit of life is also the Spirit of Truth. In the Old Testament, the Spirit as the Breath of God is closely linked with the word of God, since a spoken word is a vocalized breath. The prophets wrote as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). Indeed, it was the Spirit of Christ in the prophets who pointed to the sufferings of Christ and the glory that was to follow (1 Pet. 1:11). The key New Testament term for inspiration is *theopneustos*: it means 'God breathed', not so much breathed into the prophets (inspired) as breathed out by God. [30] The church spreads as the word of God increases and is multiplied (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20). The letters of Christ to the seven churches of Asia are concluded with the admonition, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches' (Rev. 2:7). The apostolic witness is

in the power and authority of the Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit, sent from the Father in his name, would bring to the remembrance of the apostles all the things that he had taught them (Jn. 14:25, 26). The Spirit would also reveal further things of Christ that the apostles could not receive during Jesus' earthly ministry (Jn. 16:12-14). The apostles and prophets are the foundation of the New Testament church because they are organs of revelation, receiving in the Spirit the mystery of the gospel of Christ (Eph. 2:20; 3:4-6). The church is apostolic because it rests upon that foundation: the revelation of Christ given once for all by the witnesses chosen of God and attested by signs given of the Spirit (Heb. 1:1, 2; 2:3, 4; Acts 10:40-42; 2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:42). The church dare not abandon the apostolic witness or seek to build on another foundation. God' s own witness to his saving work has been given by the Spirit in his Word. For that reason the Word of God holds authority and priority. Saving truth is not our project, to be wrought out in practice and subsequently given theoretical expression. [31] Only the Spirit of God knows the deep things of God, and these are the things that were revealed to the apostles by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-16). To be sure, we receive the apostolic witness in our own context of thought and life. There exists a reciprocal relation between our practice of the truth and our understanding of it. But the way of life opens to us through hearing the Word of God and believing God' s witness to himself.

The Illumination of the Spirit

The Spirit who communicated through the apostles and prophets the deposit of sound doctrine (1 Tim. 6:20, 21; 2 Tim. 1:13) also works to illumine our understanding of the truth. The Spirit uses the Word as a sword to pierce our hearts, and to build us up in the knowledge of Christ (Heb. 4:12, 13; 2 Timothy 3:16). The edification of the church rests upon the work of the Spirit in giving understanding of the truth. The people of God are taught of him, as the prophets promised (Is. 54:13; Jer. 31:34; 1 Jn. 2:27; 1 Thess. 4:9; Jn. 6:45; Ephesians 1:17, 18).

To recognize the authority of Scripture is not to strip Scripture of all but authority. Jesus said that the words that he spoke were spirit and life (Jn. 6:63). Too often we think of written words as ' dead letters' , forgetting the meaning of *theopneustos*. The God who speaks by revelation also opens our ears to hear. He discloses a wisdom that is foolishness to men but is his power to salvation. Growth in edification always begins with understanding the Word of God.

The Spirit who edifies is the source of life and of truth. In his work he draws us into a new existence, a new relation to God, to one another, and to the world. He is therefore not only the Spirit of life and of truth, but also the Spirit of sonship and of stewardship.

4. The Nurture of the Spirit of Sonship

As the Spirit of sonship, the Holy Spirit seals the new relation that we have with God through the gift of Christ' s righteousness (Gal. 3:5, 4:6). [32] That sonship secures our inheritance (Rom. 8:17). Our status as the children of God is affirmed by the witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:15, 16). Since the Spirit also renews us in the image of Christ, and leads us as the children of God, he ministers the vital union that we have with Christ as well as the representative union by which we are declared to be children of God. But the renewing of the Spirit that gives us *growth* in

Christ rests upon the attesting and sealing work of the Spirit that affirms our *position* in Christ. It is far from being the case that the New Testament church is merely a servant church, differing from the world only in the task it has received. The church differs in status. It is the family of God, sealed by the indwelling Spirit of adoption. The Spirit seals God' s claim or us, marking us as his possession (Eph. 1:14; 4:30). We might say that from God' s side the Spirit of Sonship is the Spirit of Fatherhood. At the same time the Spirit seals our possession of God (2 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:14).

Those who have been sealed as the sons and daughters of God have not only the assurance of their position in Christ. They have also the experience of being children of God, in fellowship with God and with each other. The fruits of the Spirit provide growth in that fellowship. Because the Spirit pours out God' s love in their hearts, they are drawn to respond in love for God (1 Jn. 3:1). They also learn to love one another (1 Jn. 4:11). The mind of the Spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:6). The peace with God that their justification establishes becomes the source of the peace that guards and patrols their hearts in their relations to each other (Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 14:33; Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7). So, too, the joy and hope of the Spirit turn believers toward God and toward the fellowship of the church (Phil. 4:4, 10; Rom. 8:23-25; 12:15; 15:14). Paul emphasizes the hope of the church in the Spirit. We taste now the first-fruits of the Spirit (Romans 8:23). The Spirit who is present in our hearts is the Spirit of Glory. He is the ' earnest' , the down-payment of the life to come (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:21). That is, in the Spirit we have not merely a sure promise of eternal life, but the beginning of that life. The fellowship with God and with the saints that we now experience is already a taste of heaven. What we will receive in heaven is marvellously greater in degree, but it is not different in kind.

Sonship in Suffering

At the same time, the status and experience of sonship in the Spirit does not remove us from the sorrows and sufferings of our existence in this world. To the contrary, it is the sons of God who are chastised that they might be corrected, and tested that they might be proved (Heb. 12:5-13; Rom. 5:34). God proved Israel as his son, leading the nation through selected experiences in the wilderness that he might prove them (Ex. 16:4; Dt. 8:2). This was the work of his Spirit (Is. 63:9-14; Ne. 9:20).

Educational goals are often stated in terms of knowing, doing, and being. The nurture of the church in the Spirit involves knowing the truth and knowing the Lord; it also involves our doing of the truth. The Spirit leads us in paths of proving, corrects us by his discipline, and continually calls us to the obedience of the children of God. The nurture of the Spirit also provides the provision and protection that is necessary for our new being, as those called from darkness into light.

Edification requires that we bring to the test the truth of God as we apply it to our experience. We must prove the will of God as we make decisions and choices (Phil. 1:9-11). Growth cannot be instantaneous; the guidance of the Spirit does not unroll before us the journey that our lives are to take. But the leading of the Spirit develops in us a growing wisdom to discern what is pleasing to God in our daily circumstances.

5. Nurture in the Stewardship of the Spirit

The Spirit of sonship is also the Spirit of stewardship. In claiming us as sons and daughters of God, the Spirit personally possesses us. In providing his gifts for ministry and service the Spirit gives himself to us, is possessed by us. The gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the church are granted toward the goals of the Spirit in enduing us. Since they are given to help us build up the body, they are 'other-directed' gifts. The work of the Spirit enables us to seek, not our own things, but the things of others. Those who seek the things of Christ will seek the things of others (Phil. 2:20, 21). It would be vain and foolish to seek self-fulfillment in bringing to expression the gifts of the Spirit. The steward is a servant. He does not seek to advance his own cause, but the cause of his master. The faithfulness required of stewards is precisely this. When Paul describes the spiritual service that we are to bring to God, he makes continual use of the expression 'one another' (Rom. 12:5, 10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16). [33] The gifts of the Spirit endue a mutual ministry of edification: 'try to excel in gifts that build up the church' (1 Cor. 14:12; Col. 3:16). The members of the church are to be built up so that they may build one another up; this is not an end in itself, since the object is that each brother and sister, as well as the church as a whole, may be presented to God to his glory (Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:12f.; 2 Cor. 11:2). Edification equips for worship and also for witness in the world. Since the church is as light and salt the vocations of Christians must reflect the Lordship of Christ in all the spheres and activities of life. Edification, therefore, includes equipping the saints for their individual ministries in the world.

Gifts and Calling of Stewards

The gifts and calling of the stewards of the Spirit are interrelated. Since spiritual gifts are not to be wrapped in a napkin, but used, the possession of a gift that would make for the edification of the church constitutes a call for its exercise. As the possessor of such a gift seeks to serve Christ by its use, he commends himself to the church so that his or her gifts may be recognized (Rom. 16:1, 2). As Paul was called to be an apostle, so every Christian is called to be a saint, and is granted gifts to exercise in mutual ministry (Romans 1:1, 6, 7). Paul's calling, of course was to a special and foundational office in the church, but the principles are the same. Paul serves as an apostle because of the gift of grace given to him. He sometimes designates his office by the term 'the grace given me' (Rom. 12:3, 6; 15:15, 16).

Individuality of Gift Patterns

Our calling is of one Lord, to one hope, in one faith, but to many individual ministries or functions. Every Christian has a function to perform. Not all functions require public recognition for their proper exercise: a man may show mercy to a sick friend without needing anyone to recognize his ministry, or even to know of it. But if someone is to administer diaconal funds on behalf of the church, or to become a regular hospital minister in the name of the church, public recognition is necessary. Church offices as they are presented in the New Testament require groupings of gifts. A teaching elder, for example, must have gifts to rule as well as gifts to teach. Yet the constellation of gifts that an individual possesses are uniquely his own.

The individuality of gifts implies, therefore, that gifts are granted *in a measure*. No one but Jesus Christ possesses all the gifts of the Spirit in their fulness. Since gifts are measured, a man is not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think (Rom. 12:3). The Christian must judge soberly as to what his or her own gifts are (1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 10:13). Further, these gifts form a pattern. Paul's analogies to the members of the body suggest that. When Paul tells Timothy to stir up the gift that is in him, he is saying, in effect, 'take care to fulfil your function' (2 Tim. 6). On the one hand, the fruits of the Spirit conform us to the image of Christ, and make us *resemble* one another. On the other hand, the varying patterns created by the gifts of the Spirit cause us to differ from one another. We are, therefore, identified by our gifts. What I am to do in serving Christ's body is an expression of who I am in the Lord. A harmony exists in Christian identity and vocation that cannot be found outside of Christ.

It is well to remember that each Christian is a new creation in Christ. It is not merely the gifts freshly granted of the Spirit that are new. One's 'natural' gifts are also new in the Creator Spirit. Since all gifts are granted for service, we discover them not in the abstract, but in use. In the love of Christ, we seek to serve others. To be effective in that service, we may desire greater gifts than we have received. We may expect to grow in the effectiveness of our own ministries as we seek to build up Christ's church.

When all our gifts are marshalled in the service of the Lord, we will be faithful stewards (2 Cor. 4:1, 2; 1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10). This does not mean that all our gifts, natural and spiritual, will come into full use. The purposes of Christ's kingdom set priorities for us. Since our goal is not self-realization, we need not worry about 'wasted' talents. Heaven offers time enough, in any case!

The case of Samson warns us that spiritual gifts may be misused. Paul knew that some of his opponents were preaching Christ out of envy during his imprisonment in Rome (Phil. 1:15). The Apostle takes pains to warn against both envy and pride in the use of the gifts of the Spirit. Most importantly, all the gifts lose their meaning apart from love, love that recognizes the indebtedness to others of the gift that has been received (1 Cor. 13; Rom. 1:1; 14:15; 1 Cor. 9:16-23).

Patterns of Gifts in the Ordering of the Church

The pattern of the gifts of the Spirit granted to individuals establishes and supports a pattern in the structure of the church. The church is a body; in an organism there is both life and structure, ardour and order, to use the phrase of J. E. L. Newbigin. Often there has been tension between the advocates of vitality and structure in the church. At times this has been seen as a struggle between the spiritual and the institutional. But it is a mistake to equate the Spirit with life and not also with order. The Creator Spirit moves upon the face of the waters and brings order out of that which is without form and void. Paul must tell the rather frenzied Corinthians that God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. His instructions, he reminds the church, are not lacking in inspired authority, given of the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:33-40). The life of the Spirit is organic life, ordered life, life in the discipline of the family of God, in the structure of the Christian temple.

In particular, the ministry of the church is ordered of the Spirit to the goals that we have been examining: the goals of the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world. The gifts of the Spirit to these ends are gifts for the ministry of the Word, the ministry of order, and the ministry of mercy. Further, these gifts are granted to some in greater measure; their stewardship needs to be recognized in the church. We may therefore distinguish between the general office of every believer and the special offices recognized for those with outstanding gifts in these areas. The mediatorial office of Jesus Christ is unique, standing above all office in his church. The attached diagram provides a schematic picture of the order of ministry in the church of Christ.

The Means of Ministry: Ministering the Word

The ministry of the Word is committed to every believer in the sense that every Christian must confess Christ before men, and be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him (Rom. 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:15). This is, of course, a minimum. Christians should seek to be as effective as possible in ministering the Word in their families, and as they have opportunity to encourage their fellow Christians. Paul and the other New Testament writers emphasize the ministry of those who have been called to preach and teach the Word of God (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:11). There is danger that the church today, in resisting clericalism, will move to an opposite extreme. A popular exegesis of Ephesians 4:12 explains that official teachers are to equip the saints for their work of ministry. That exegesis may well be correct. Certainly Paul does think of every Christian serving as a joint of supply (v.16). But the structure of the whole passage still needs attention. The risen and glorified Christ gives the special teaching gifts to the church as the means of its growth to maturity in Christ. It is the priority of the Word of God that gives such prominence to the teaching gifts. Jesus Christ is the only Logos; his is the prophetic office that has inspired the Scriptures, through the Spirit. Ministers of the Word are his servants.

The Ministry of Order

The Spirit of truth establishes the ministry of the Word, the Spirit of holiness establishes the ministry of order. It is not enough for the church to know the truth. We must confirm in our lives the confession of our lips. The order of the church is the order of the law of love. Paul is dismayed that the Corinthians are prepared to take financial disputes before heathen magistrates. He argues that if they do not have qualified judges to handle such matters, they should choose unqualified ones. All they stand to lose is money! But, really, no Christian ought to be regarded as without qualifications. Do not the Corinthians know that one day they will judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3). How much more may they judge the affairs that concern only this life! The lifestyle of the Christian community must be ordered by love in all things. The hortatory sections of the New Testament epistles regularly recognize that God has appointed authority structures for the ordering of life in Christ's church. Special gifts for governing are given of the Spirit (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Tim. 5: 17). ' Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account . . .' (Heb. 13:17). Rule under the Lordship of Christ is not imperial domination, but self-giving service, yet it does carry authority; Christ has given the keys of the kingdom to establish order in his church. The discipline of

government in the church maintains the glory of Christ' s name, reclaims the offender, and bears witness to the world.

The Ministry of Mercy

Finally, since the Spirit is the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of the age to come, the ministry of mercy is part of the form of the church. Christ' s miracles of compassion were signs of hope; they foreshadowed the final salvation of the Lord when the curse would be removed. The Christian church continues to show mercy in Christ' s name in faith and hope given of the Spirit. Every Christian has hope through the witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23). The Spirit prays for us and with us, and we find healing and relief from the throne of grace. The Christian reflects the hope of the Spirit in the tenderness of his service to those in need. Every Christian must minister to others, even to the least of Christ' s brothers (Mt. 25:31-46). The ministry of mercy is also exercised in a special sense by those whose gifts enable them to bring comfort, hope, cheer and counsel to those in distress (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; Rom. 16:1, 2).

C. Mission in the Spirit

1. Missio Dei

The mission of the Spirit is the mission of God who draws men and women to himself through Jesus Christ. By the work of the Spirit Jesus was incarnate in the womb of Mary (Lk. 1 :35). The Spirit descended upon Christ at his baptism, enduing him for ministry as one filled with the Spirit (Mt. 3:16; Lk. 3:22; 4:14). The mission of Jesus was fulfilled in the Spirit. When the time came for Jesus to leave his disciples, he promised the coming of another Friend and Advocate, who would be sent by the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:16; 15:26). The Holy Spirit would continue the divine mission. After the resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. This was the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus alone could provide. It was the blessing that he would send from the throne of glory (Acts 1:4, 5; 2:33).

In the introduction to the Book of Acts, Luke refers to his Gospel, the first volume of his account about Jesus. Luke says that in the Gospel he recounted the things that Jesus ' began to do and to teach' (Acts 1:1). He evidently intends in his second volume to tell about what Jesus continued to do and teach. Jesus no longer appears in his resurrection body in Acts, except for his meeting with Saul on the Damascus road. Instead, Luke' s second book is filled with references to the Holy Spirit. From the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost the great movement of the mission of the Spirit is evident. The initiative is always with the Spirit, who calls, empowers, and directs in the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem (where Peter preaches to the Jews), to Rome (where Paul teaches the Gentiles).

The Spirit uses believers as his instruments, but he shows his sovereignty in the whole mission enterprise. Peter well acknowledges, ' We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him' (Acts 5:32). Peter' s own understanding had to be enlarged by a special vision before he was prepared to go to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:9-16). The leaders of the Jerusalem church were shocked when they heard that Peter had

baptized the uncircumcised Gentile centurion and his household. But the Spirit had again taken the initiative. He had fallen on those Gentiles as they heard the preaching of Peter. ' They had no further objections and praised God, saying, ' So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life' (Acts 11:18).

The Spirit guides the church in choosing Spirit-filled men for its ministry (Acts 6:3), but the Spirit also intervenes directly in choosing whom he will. Jesus meets Saul the persecutor; Saul is filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:17), and the Spirit commands that Saul and Barnabas be separated as the first mission task-force to carry the gospel overseas (Acts 13:1-4). Luke tells us how Paul' s journeys are directed by the Spirit (Acts 16:6, 7). Even through opposition and persecution the Spirit guides in scattering the church and thrusting forth witnesses to Christ.

The Mission of the Spirit for the Glory of God

The Spirit reveals divine power in accomplishing his mission. His task is to exalt Jesus Christ and to glorify the Father. The disciples, as they fulfil the Great Commission, are to baptize into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In mission, the Spirit is one with the Triune God.

The work of the Spirit in oneness with Christ is pictured in the Book of Revelation. There John beholds seven Spirits before the throne (Rev. 1:4). But the seven Spirits belong to Christ (Rev. 3:1); they may reflect the seven-fold enduing of the Messiah (Is. 11:2). In the intricacy of the vision, the seven Spirits are also the seven eyes of the Lamb, seeing and directing all things (Rev. 7:5). By the Spirit, Christ' s work will be brought to consummation glory.

The Spirit, as the Spirit of glory, leads the mission of Christ' s kingdom forward as well as heavenward. Jesus has returned to heaven, as Peter declared, until the ' time . . . for God to restore everything' (Acts 3:21). The outpouring of the Spirit points to the final cosmic renovation that will accompany the coming of the great day of the Lord (Acts 2:19, 20). The fire of the baptism of the Spirit signifies that renovation (Lk. 3:16, 17). If the disciples are endued rather than consumed by the flame of heaven, it is because the fire is the baptism of their Lord. He has borne the searing flame of judgment, having been baptized in that fire (Lk. 12:49, 50). Now his baptism of fire upon them cleanses and renews, but does not destroy.

Vindication by the Spirit' s Mission

The Spirit' s purpose in glorifying Christ is accomplished in a mission that brings judgment as well as blessing. The Spirit as Advocate brings the case for the prosecution against the world (Jn. 16:8-11). [34] The world stands convicted for the sin of unbelief. The Spirit also brings a verdict against the world with respect to Christ' s triumphant righteousness, sealed by his ascension. Satan, the Prince of this world and the Accuser of the brethren, is also convicted and condemned. In Paul' s confrontation with Elymas the power of the Spirit in judgment is evident. Ananias and Sapphira are judged for lying to the Spirit (Acts 5:3); Stephen accuses his hearers of resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51). The mission of the Spirit of glory in a rebellious world brings conflict, as the history of missions after Acts continues to show.

2. The Mission of the Church in the Spirit

The mission of the church is carried out through ministries of the Word, of life (or order) and of mercy. In all of these areas the church witnesses through the Spirit. The witness of the Word is required of every believer, for every Christian must confess the name of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9, 10; Mt. 10:32f.). This confession must often be made before sceptical or hostile audiences. Every Christian must be prepared ' to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Pet. 3:15). The questioner in such a case may well be a magistrate before whom the Christian stands accused. In such circumstances, the Holy Spirit will be the teacher of the accused, fulfilling his role as Advocate (Mt. 10:20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:12; 2 Cor. 13:3). The New Testament never suggests that all Christians have the gifts of an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher (1 Cor. 12:29). Skill in presenting the claims of the gospel, wisdom in expounding the Scriptures to show their testimony to Christ: these are special gifts of the Spirit. But, significantly, no Christian may be ashamed of Christ. The greatest obstacle to the spread of the gospel is not the limits of the believer' s understanding or powers of expression. It is the limits of his courage and faithfulness. Faithfulness will often be put to the test in the life of the church and the experience of the Christian. For that reason, the witness of every Christian is put in the context of confession under scrutiny and duress. In the Book of Acts we have records of the witness of gifted men on trial, speaking as the Spirit gives them expression (Acts 4:8; 5:29-32; 22:3-21; 24:10-21). The filling of the Spirit endues Christians to speak the Word with boldness (Acts 4:31).

The Witness of Life

The verbal witness of the church is supported and extended by the witness of the life of the believing community. The apostolic church, ' encouraged by the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord' (Acts 9:31). The grace of the Spirit that built up the church became the ground of the growth of the church. Barnabas, ' a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith' , was called to mission after he had manifested his gifts in encouraging the saints in their walk with the Lord (Acts 11:23f.). As in the Old Testament, the very separation and holiness of the people of God (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1) becomes a witness, like that of a city set upon a hill. Seeing the good works of the Spirit-filled church, the nations will be brought near, will fall down and declare that God is in the midst of his people (Mt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 14:25). As the last cited passage shows, the gifts of the Spirit for worship and for edification have their own attractiveness with respect to witness. The spiritual holiness of the church, by its contrast with the corruption of a heathen world, will shine as a light of witness (Phil. 2:12-18).

As we have seen, the Spirit perfects the church in holiness through a godly discipline. The order of the law of love structures the life of the church. That self-denying love must also reach out to others (1 Thess. 3:12). Christians must be concerned for the peace of the city where they are passing residents. They pray for those in authority to this end, knowing the importance of a context in which the gospel can be spread (1 Tim. 2:1-4). It is part of the mission of the church to witness to God' s standards of righteousness in the midst of a world where they are defied. Especially the lay members of the church must penetrate with their witness the spheres of work, government, and leisure where they are involved. The church penetrates like salt or leaven, not

with physical force; it is the work of the Spirit that enables this penetration. The weapons of our warfare are not physical, but spiritual, as Paul reminds us (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Witness of Mercy

The witness of the church is extended through the ministry of mercy. This appears clearly in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The miracles he performed were not wonders of judgment, but of healing and forgiveness. Jesus identified his own ministry in terms of the prophecy of Isaiah 61. He was anointed of the Spirit to preach the gospel to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the bruised and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18, 19). The year of the Lord is God' s own fulfilment of the year of Jubilee in the law of Moses (Leviticus 25). It was the fiftieth year in the sacred calendar, the year when all debts were to be cancelled, all Israelite slaves set free, and every man restored to his own inheritance. God' s great day of restoration and renewal would accomplish all that was symbolized in the year of Jubilee. Jesus announces the fulfilment in himself, and proclaims that he is the Anointed One who will do all that the oracle promises. In his ministry of healing Jesus revealed the mercy of God' s salvation. His miracles were signs of hope pointing to the final blessing in store for those who trusted in him. Again, the work of the Spirit is an anticipation of glory, an intrusion into the present of the joy that will come at last.

In the early church the work of ministering to the poor and afflicted took on such large proportions that the apostles were overwhelmed, and sought relief so that they might give priority to prayer and the ministry of the word. Those who were chosen to assist the apostles were men ' full of the Spirit and wisdom' (Acts 6:3). The involvement of others in the administration of benevolence did not end the ministrations of the apostles themselves. Miracles of healing were performed by Peter, John, and other apostles. The ' signs of an apostle' given of the Spirit were signs that conformed to the ministry of Jesus, who was anointed with the Spirit, and who ' went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil . . .' (Acts 10:38; cf. Heb. 2:4; Acts 5:12-16). Peter speaks of the stewardship of the gifts of the Spirit as benevolent sharing of what we have received, shown for example in the grace of hospitality (1 Pet. 4:10). Those who sow to the Spirit will be eager to show kindness to all men as they have opportunity, especially, of course, to the household of faith (Gal. 6:8-10).

3. The Missionary Gifts

The Spirit moves the whole church to witness to Christ in word and deed, but the Spirit also structures the church for witness according to the gifts that he imparts. The gifts and office of the apostle are first in the church, because the apostles, as we have seen, are foundation stones. Inspired apostolic teaching is the foundation upon which the church rests. But the apostles are also those who are sent into the world with the message of the gospel. Barnabas, who shared the missionary task, is called an apostle along with Paul.

Barnabas did not share the foundational calling of the twelve, but he did share their evangelistic labours (Acts 14:14). If the first office in the church, supported by unique gifts of the Spirit, is a missionary office, we are reminded again that the church itself is a missionary organization. Its

missionary calling may be blunted by worldliness or smothered by worldly institutionalism, but the gifts of the Spirit do not move it in that direction. Unfortunately, the foundational aspect of the apostolic office, the authority of the apostles in delivering to the church the teachings of Christ, has been emphasized to the detriment of the missionary calling that they fulfilled. This may seem strange in view of the extensive information that we have in the New Testament about that apostolic missionary *par excellence*, the Apostle Paul. Still more unfortunate is the obscurity that has been allowed to surround the New Testament record about the office of the evangelist. At the time of the Reformation, the vast number of clergy at all levels in the hierarchy without pastoral charges was rightly seen as an abuse in need of correction. Appeal had been made to the office of the evangelist to justify ordination to hierarchical position (on the ground that Timothy and Titus were evangelists who ordained elders: 1 Tim. 5:22; Titus 1:5). [35] To avoid this possible conclusion, the Reformers linked the office of the evangelist to the office of the apostle so closely that both were held to have ceased with the apostolic age. [36] As a consequence, the missionary character of the church itself was diminished or lost from view for a large segment of Protestantism. When the church was reawakened to its missionary calling in the latter part of the eighteenth century, much of the organization of the mission was assumed to be unconnected with New Testament teaching regarding office. To this day the tendency persists. Missionary structure has been adapted to para-ecclesiastical forms that may be shaped more in the model of a business or political organization than the order of Christ's church.

Of course, the office of the evangelist is not the only missionary office in the church, although it has a distinctive missionary focus. Pastors and teachers are necessarily involved in proclaiming the gospel. Paul writes to the church at Rome and speaks of his desire to preach the gospel to them: something that he does in his epistle (Rom. 1:15). Deacons, particularly, are involved in witness as they exercise their gifts of helping and healing. As we recognize the missionary dimension of all church office, the outreach of the church can be seen to include not only the evangelist to preach the gospel, but the use of every gift of the Spirit by the widest range of gifted Christians. The fellowship of the Spirit that binds Christians together also calls and equips them to be Christ's envoys to the ends of the earth.

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ENDNOTES

- [1] A brief preliminary bibliography accompanies this essay (pp.303-4). See especially D. A. Carson, ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (Exeter 1984).
- [2] In spite of his wealth of analysis and perception, Gibson Winter's prescription for the church is sociological, not theological: *The New Creation as Metropolis* (New York 1963). So, too, Marxist presuppositions shape the view of Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll 1973).
- [3] J. C. Hoekendijk, 'The Church in Missionary Thinking' *IRM* 41 (1952) 325.
- [4] Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Lund, August 15th to 28th, 1952* (London 1953) 22.
- [5] Alfred Loisy, for example, said that 'Jesus announced the kingdom of God, but what appeared was the church' *L'Évangile et l'Église* (Paris 1902) 11. See the account of the change in scholarly opinion in Oscar Cullman, *Peter* (Philadelphia 1953) 166-167. See also the essay and literature cited by Gerhard Maier, 'The Church in the Gospel of Matthew: Hermeneutical Analysis of the Current Debate; in D. A. Carson, *op. cit.* 45-63.
- [6] 1QS 5:5; 8:1, 2, 5-10; 9:3; 11:8. Ps. 18:17, 32. See Otto Betz, 'Felsenmann und Felsengemeinde . . .' *ZNW* 48 (1957), 49-77. See also E. P. Clowney, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Church* (Phillipsburg, N.J. 1979) 87-107.
- [7] 1QH 6:24-26.
- [8] George Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the N. T.* (Cambridge 1943) 36 n.2. J. Y. Campbell, 'The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word ECCLESIA' *JJS* 49 (1948) 133.
- [9] See the discussion of Presbyterianism and Independency in James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ* (Edinburgh 1868) ch. 5, pp. 296-331. See also, for the view of congregational independency, Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago 1972) 114-119.
- [10] *The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government, and of Ordination of Ministers; Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, etc.* (Philadelphia 1745; reprint, New York 1880).
- [11] E. P. Clowney, 'The Final Temple' *WTJ* 35 (1973) 156-189.
- [12] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1965) 113-114.
- [13] On the church and the kingdom see Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia 1962) 334-396. R. T. France, 'The Church and the Kingdom of God', in D. A. Carson, *op. cit.* 30-44, emphasizes the dynamic use of the term in relation to God's saving power.
- [14] C. E. B. Cranfield, 'The Christian's Political Responsibility according to the N.T.' *SJT* 15 (1962) 176-192. Cf. David H. Adeney, 'The Church and Persecution', in this volume, pp.275-302.
- [15] G. Mendenhall, 'Covenant' *IDB* 1, 714-723.
- [16] The black obelisk of Shalmaneser III in the British Museum shows Jehu doing obeisance, followed by a caravan of tribute. See R. D. Barnett, *Illustrations of Old Testament History* (London 1966) 48, fig. 25.
- [17] Ralph D. Winter, 'Churches Need Missions Because Modalities Need Sodalities' *EMQ* 7

(1971).

[18] See R. T. France, 'Jesus, I' Unique: Les fondements bibliques d' une confession christologique' *Hokhma* 17 (1981) 43-44.

[19] As against John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London 1952), who says, 'It is almost impossible to exaggerate the materialism and crudity of Paul' s doctrine of the Church as literally now the resurrection body of Christ' (p. 51).

[20] See lexicons on *rôḥ*, Wm. L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids 1971) 329.

[21] Friedrich Büchsel declares, 'The deepest ground for the fact that we may not represent being-in-Christ in a spatial or quasi-spatial way is that Christ always is and remains the Lord, the Judge, for Paul' ('" In Christus" bei Paulus' *ZNW* 42 [1949] 154). Büchsel and others protest the concept of Pauline mysticism described by Adolf Deissmann, *Die neutestamentliche Formel ' in Christo Jesu'* (Marburg 1892).

[22] Friedrich Hauck, ' *Koinonos* etc., *TDNT* 4,797-8°9.

[23] James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London 1970) 45.

[24] See Eduard Schweizer, ' *Pneuma*' *TDNT* 6, 411; Eduard Lohse, ' *Pentekoste*' *ibid.* 48; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia 1975) 140; *Baptism in the Spirit* 48.

[25] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York 1951) 1, 155-157.

[26] See James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 322, 323.

[27] See Peter T. O' Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC; Waco, TX 1982) 206-211.

[28] Michel de Goedt, 'The Intercession of the Spirit in Christian Prayer (Rom. 8:26-27)', in Christian Duquoc and Claude Geffre, eds., *The Prayer Life* (New York 1972) 26-28.

[29] Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids 1975) 429-430.

[30] B. B. Warfield, 'God-inspired Scripture', in S. G. Craig, ed., *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia 1948) 245-296. Cf. J. I. Packer, ' *Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids 1958) 75-114.

[31] For this concept of theory and praxis see Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, 'Theology as Critical Reflection on Praxis', 615.

[32] Geerhardus Vos, 'Paul' s Eschatological Concept of the Spirit', in Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., ed., *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: the Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ 1980) 110.

[33] Gene A. Getz, *Building Up One Another* (Wheaton, Ill. 1976).

[34] Leon Morris, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids 1971) 697-698.

[35] Similar arguments have been advanced in support of hierarchical orders of ministry within the Reformed churches. See Thomas Witherow, *The Form of the Christian Temple* (Edinburgh 1889) 326-338.

[36] *The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster* 49: 'The officers which Christ hath appointed for the Edification of his Church. . . are, Some extraordinary, as Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets, which are ceased. . .'

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