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The Purpose of Our Creation Fulfilled¹

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Who Knows Our Purpose?

Why are we who we are? Why do we exist? These are not crazy questions. They are crucial questions, never more so than at the end of twentieth century. But where do we go to find answers? Do we begin with ourselves? Do we start with man as man? No. we must not. Starting with ourselves will never help us to understand ourselves. This is the tragic irony of twentieth century man. To find help, to understand our purpose as humans, begin with God. triune God - Father. Son and Holy Spirit. Here, or rather with God, we find our answers.

What do we know of the Trinity prior to the creation of the world? We know the Trinity existed as three persons yet one God, and that there was communication and love between the three persons of the Trinity prior to the creation of all else. The implication tells us of the essence of the universe as it is; and there are two possibilities: one is the beginning of all things as a de-personal beginning and the other as a personal beginning. The Scriptural emphasis is on the side of the personal. That is, that the universe - speaking of it this way and not in a pantheistic way - does not begin with a new personal beginning, but originating from an eternal personal Trinity - three persons loving each other and in communication.

God in his Trinity, he is the one who explains human existence. How? Genesis 1:26 - 1 :31 says there is a special circle or class of creation that can be designated in "our image", that which is, in this sense, like God. Here we are told that not only is there personality in the true sense (God), but something more. God made a portion of creation different from the rest to be like himself. The very word "image" suggests an important distinction between humans and other portions of creation. This is the mannishness of man. This is what distinguishes us from everything else.

Of course, we may ask the question, "Why?" Or we can word it in other ways, "What is the reason for man? What is the person of man? What is the purpose of man? What is the reason for his existence?" Surely this is the cry of twentieth century man, if he is a sensitive man at all. It recalls the reason for human existence. So when people ask me in a discussion what the Christian answer is to the reason of existence, without hesitancy I would say the Bible speaks of the purpose of our creation when it says to love God with all our heart and soul and mind. Yet this must be understood in the Scriptural framework. It is not to love God in the concept of a Kierkegaardian (Soren Kierkegaard 1813-55) leap. It is not to love God as though faith were something in itself. The answer, according to the Bible, is not a faith in faith, but a faith in one who, is there and, therefore, it is a living relationship with him. It is to love God with all our heart and soul and mind, but definitely in the Biblical sense.

In Deuteronomy 6: 4-6 we read these words:

“Hear. O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.”

They are to teach the commands not in some external form but they are to be in their hearts. You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength ... this is not to be an external thing put on like a hat in my religious moments, or for a humanistic reason; but it is rather to be the set of my heart.

This is the Old Testament statement that Jesus quoted in Matthew 22: 34-40; Mark 12: 28-31; and Luke 10: 25-28. So Jesus’ restatement sweeps us back to the beginning of our relationship with God, not ours only but mankind’s, and not only mankind’s but each individual man. This is the basis of the first commandment; this is the reason for Adam’s existence; and it is the reason for your existence, or you have none, or no sufficient one. It is the call of loving, personal fellowship and communication with the God who is here. And, then, with each other - those who are my neighbours in the sense of being the same structure as myself; those who are my kind; those who are in the same circle of creation as that in which I stand, namely people. Consequently. the fulfilling of the purpose of our existence is to have fellowship, communication and love - first to God, and then to those who are our kind - all mankind.

Man’s Sinfulness and the Confusion of Purpose

Yet, we might ask, has not man’s rebellion and wickedness so much seen in history changed the purpose for our being? Might we now say that our purpose is to resolve the dilemma of guilt, shame, and death”!

In Genesis 3:8 we notice that prior to the Fall. God was in open communication with Adam and Eve, whom he made in his own image. God walked with man. God talked to man. There was love and fellowship, communication - true communication, true love, true fellowship - between the personal creator and the personal created. We are told in the New Testament “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life. “ John 3: 16. But if God loves the world in its present rebellious condition surely, then, God loved the world prior to the revolt. “God so loved the world” did not begin when man became a fallen man - it is God’s natural relationship to the man, the creature which He created in the particular sense “like Himself”. Man is not like God in the sense that God is infinite and man is finite; God is the Creator, man is the created. Nevertheless, God has created man like himself, the God who is a personal God. We have been made in his image. It is very plain that there was real communication. Fellowship, love, God to man, man to God, man to man in the case of Adam to Eve, and communication between God and man. Surely this is an overwhelming wonder of fulfilment to that which man finds himself to be.

However. in Genesis 2:17 we have God very carefully speaking these words, “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” This is not an abstraction. It is the single test of love. Any test could be given. It is not that God created a fruit that was evil in itself. Not at all. But there is a test of love given, a place where in this one who is different from the machine is able to respond on a different level, because he is made different from the machine. This is not a person-to-machine relationship. It is a person-to-person relationship, and God gives man the tremendous opportunity to respond in love and fellowship on the level of that which he was uniquely. We find Jesus later saying “If you love me, keep my commandments”. And this

too was the emphasis of the Old Testament - if we love God we will keep his commandments. So too for Adam and Eve: if they loved him they would keep his commands.

Here was a single, simple test: if you love me, keep my commandments. Why? Because this is a person-to-person relationship, the high calling of responding on the personal, loving level, on the basis of an all-sufficient verbalised communication which carries a motivated call. It is not vague in any of its parts. It is on a clear base, and there is a clear motivation and a proper one. His being made personal does not remove the factor that he was the creature, and being the creature he is not to set up a rival centre of the universe. And as he stands there, this is the whole question. Person in loving, non-mechanical, choice: where you have the wonder of what you are, or where you set up a rival centre in the universe. The high calling of loving God also includes thinking after him and going after him.

Scripture emphasises that the Fall was an historic, space-time, once-for-all event. And here we have the Serpent, the one who has revolted. We are told carefully in Scripture, desiring to be like the Most High, he now comes and speaks the same word to man (Genesis 3: 4.5) "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." This is a striking parallel to Genesis 2: 17. Where God said in "the day" you shall die. Satan says. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God. knowing good and evil." And here is the thing in tension. In Genesis 2: 17, God offers not just a vague statement. but he is saying that which is the case. In Scripture it is clearly indicated that there are three deaths which are the result of our rebellion against the Creator. The second death is physical death, the third death is the final judgement, an eternal separation in its total sense. But the first death is separation from God and this is the real death. The physical death and the death that will come in that future day of judgement at the hand of the Lamb of God who becomes judge -these are merely the natural, horizontal extensions of the death which is the central death; namely separation from God. After all, man was made to be in relationship with this God. In the day that he revolted he died.

Twentieth century man does not understand this, even though we see it all around us and feel it intensely in us. But if we miss this point we will never understand how much the gospel can help us. John 3: 16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." So, as we look at this we must understand that the second half of this verse is just as certain in an existential situation as is the first. When at the moment, on the day I believed on Christ as saviour I have everlasting life. But equally until that moment comes, I am under the wrath of God, and as such, I am dead. In this sense, we can speak truly that man is dead.

And of all the generations that wrestled with this, we Christians of the second half of the twentieth century ought to appreciate it best. On every side we hear the cry. "Man is dead!" In this sense the twentieth century already knows a portion of the truth. They do not know why they are dead - death is related to the wrong causes and factors, but they shout "I am dead!" This is not just a stand or a piece of theatre, but the sensitivity of many of today's lost, feeling the horribleness of the nobility of man and. yet, the death of man. The sensitivity of many towards this will pull those of us who are Christians to shreds. The lost are sensitive to the horribleness of the nobility man, but sense a being without purpose, meaningless and dead. You see, this should not be so hard for us to comprehend. In Genesis 3: 22 it is written, "And the Lord God said "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from

the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” Now you will notice back in the serpent’s temptation in 3:5 “You will be like God, knowing good and evil” that this is a half-lie, but not a total lie. Because of this rebellion and real consequence, God drove the man and woman out of the garden and placed at the east a cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep them away from the tree of life.

From the true sense of that which was the purpose of man, and the only real fulfilment of man both as mankind and the individual personal fulfilment, man is dead. But from the side of Satan’s desire and then man’s desire, he did have freedom. Freedom not in the sense that man was created free, because the Biblical sense is that he was created wonderfully free. Any time you find a modern man you find a deterministic man. Modern man finds no way for an integrity of the personality making true choices in a true history. But the Bible says as man was made, he was made in the true cause-and-effect history and he was significant in that history. He was a real man making a real choice. And this has been the message of the Church, not only in the less strict theological stream. Reformed theologians have insisted that Adam stood in total freedom making a choice without prior conditioning. In this sense, man was always free, but he was free now in a new way in that he set up a rival centre of the universe.

This was a different freedom - a freedom with two sides. On the one side, it is a freedom to shake one’s fist in the face of the Creator; on the other side, a freedom to be dead. Consequently, man is shut away from that continuity of continued life as it is spoken here. Man in rebellion. Man to destroy. Man to leave much of the world in waste, to rum that which has been under his dominion into a horror of great darkness with flashes of beauty across its dark screen and yet, as a whole, that which would cause us to bow our heads in sorrow.

What a tragedy! Eternal life and fullness of life: Eternal life - a concept of physical continuity; the fullness of life - the real life of fellowship with God. Both smashed because man has sinned. You will return to the earth. You will die. But more than that: in this moment, O man. you are dead! At this time, as the man and woman are driven from the garden, we can think of it in visual terms, in the strokes of a paintbrush. Adam and Eve turned away from the garden, going out away from God in grief. Or we could say it in the harsh words of modern theatre such as Sartre would say it: “There is no infinite reference point and, consequently, I am ruined.” In both cases the same thing is stated: Driven out. Smashed fellowship.

Our Purpose Made Possible

Yet we do not need to stop at the point of man’s banishment from the Garden. The Bible does not stop there, even if contemporary man, existentially, knows nothing more than lustiness. Consider something of even greater awe and significance: Jesus Christ hanging on the cross saying “My God. My God! Why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27: 46; Mk 15: 34). Here is the second person of the Trinity, incarnate God, taking my stead, my place. He substitutes himself in the place where I rightly should be. In my place, the separation which is as a result of man’s sin is carried into the Trinity itself. Scripture says that at this point the sun was darkened, and there were shakings of the earth (Mt 27: 45-56; Mk 15: 33-38; Lk 23: 44-46). But surely if we understand this not as some religious story but understand it rather as that which is, can we wonder that the earth shakes? Here we have the separation caused by the sin of man being carried into the eternal Trinity itself in which there has been eternal communication and love. Is it any wonder that all shakes?

The eternal unity before the creation of the world, the eternal fellowship, the love, the

communication, the relationships of these things, now broken as He becomes our substitute. The physical wounds themselves were painful, but they are not the heart of the matter. The eternal Son of God is willing to become our substitute to take our place, to bear our guilt at that crucial place of the separation that has come because of man's sin. "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?" Then as the work comes to conclusion, He can say. "It is finished." (In 19: 30) It is accomplished; it is done. He can say, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Lk 23: 46)

The broken fellowship carried up into the loving relationship of the Trinity and conquered there, not through God ever saying "Your sin does not matter." But saying the opposite: "It is against my holiness and., therefore, against an absolute moral standard of the universe rooted not behind me but in my own character. Yet my love holds to the high point of carrying this up into the Trinity and Jesus as the substitute, the Lamb of God, bears the individual guilt." And the fellowship, the communication, and the love, broken in Adam's rebellion, and then over and over again in each of our rebellions and deliberate sins, is restored. This is the message.

But it is more, it does not end here; because as we listen to John the Baptist, he makes two prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. The first is "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". (John 1: 29-33) But with this prophecy is a further promise. The Lamb of God who was baptised by the Spirit will, himself baptise by the Spirit. These two stand together. Indeed the Lamb of God is not only the Lamb of God but also the sender of the Holy Spirit. When I accept Christ as my saviour there is a forensic act - justification, God declaring that on the basis of Christ's finished work my guilt is removed once and forever. In addition, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the individual Christian and on this basis the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, Gal 5: 22, 23) is produced in our lives.

The fruit of the Spirit is love and all the other qualities (patience, kindness, goodness, etc.) flow from this love that is the fruit. The fruit-bearing of the Spirit in the individual Christian is not just in a future day in heaven. Having accepted Christ, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit as I yield to his working, he will bear the fruit which fulfils the commandment summarised by Jesus as "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and the second. Love your neighbour as yourself" (Lk 10: 27). He will bear this fruit through me. It isn't just a theoretical system. It is a truth bringing into practice that which is the call of man in the first place - to love God and to love those who are our kind.

This is the meaning I would suggest of 1 Corinthians 13. It isn't to be taken in some liberal theological sense that makes love just some big, soft, characterless thing. It is against the flaming holiness of God. Nevertheless, I am to love God with all my heart, soul and mind, and I am to love my neighbour as myself. While it is something which will not be perfect in this life, it should be substantial in the work of the Holy Spirit in every individual Christian's life. It is not to be theoretical. If you are born again, you are indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. But if you are indwelt by him then you are a human (in contrast to a machine) called to walk in the Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit produce his fruit through you and me. Here now we fulfil the first commandment. Here we are returned in practice to the purpose of our creation.

This is what we were made to be; and on the basis of the finished work of Christ and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. we are called to the fulfilment of our purpose of a person-to-person relationship with the God who is there, and then to our fellow men. Love and communication in each proper place: not just an abstract redemption, not even only heaven, but this is the Christian call. This is the reason Jesus can say that when we love one another

(not just Christians but also others) we show we are his disciples. Not just because he loved, but through his redemption and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, we show forth the whole structure of what is. After we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, the two things that were smashed (eternal life and fullness of life) are restored. When we accept Christ as our Saviour, indeed we are promised that as we die to go to be with Jesus. Nevertheless there is the resurrection and the continuity of life. There is the restoration of what can be spoken of as life at once and forever.

But let us not end with our thinking here. To end here is to miss all the wonder of being restored to the purpose of our creation in the present life in a substantial fashion. There is fullness of life:

As we walk in faith and yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, then there is a practical existential meaning for this moment. As Christ says at the end of His high priestly prayer in John 17: 26; "I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." The love that always was between the Father and the Son, now is not only toward us, but is to be in us. Not mechanically administered, not as a machine, but as a relationship with man who is made in the image of God. As we yield ourselves in faith to the work of Christ and to the Holy Spirit, this becomes not a sentence but a poor, never perfect, always growing, yet substantial reality that can be observed in the external world. Remember that our theme is the purpose of our creation fulfilled.

Our Purpose Known, Experienced, and Proclaimed

Four points, in conclusion. First: How wonderful, then, is the death of Jesus Christ in space, time and history. What love it shows! How far removed from that soft nothingness, that amoral concept of "modern man's word, god. How opposite. How wonderful is this love. John 3: 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." It is not a universal salvation, but it is for those who, on the basis of their manliness, accept the gift. Jesus carefully ties this to his historic death on the cross, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. How wonderful is that death on the cross!

Secondly, the command to love God is now meant to be the Christian's first commandment. We are not saved for an antinomian (lawlessness) end. We are saved to fulfil the purpose of our creation in the first place, and not on merely some offer of our future day in perfection, but now - through the work of the Spirit in our life. Love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. When we do not love God, we are not fulfilling the purpose of our creation. As such, we have returned to the sin of Adam and Eve: to think alone, to will alone, as though we are God. When we fail to do this, the peace of God will die in our hearts; our fellowship with God will wither. Once more we have disobeyed that tremendous love, fellowship, and communion that God offers us. And it is not only wrong, it is destructive. We will have destroyed the purpose of our creation anew, the purpose for which God has made us. Christians should not expect the peace of God in their hearts while trampling upon the love of God - this is too much, it is not this way. And then we must learn the ever present wonder of the present cleansing of the Blood of the Lamb, to return again, and say we are sorry and have our fellowship restored on the basis of the finished work of the Son of God.

Thirdly, as we yield to the Holy Spirit, there will be fruit. The first fruit is the fulfilling of the command love God with all our heart, soul and mind. But as we yield to the Holy Spirit there will be a fruit to love others and each in his or her proper way. For example, the

husband shall love his wife (Eph 5: 25-29). There is to be a love in the home within the legal circle of marriage. There must be a legal circle if we are to live in the universe that has meaning. But inside that legal circle there is to be love. There are other loves. The Holy Spirit will produce a non-confused loving one's neighbour, but each in his own place or position. In Acts 4: 32-35 we are told of the sharing that went on amongst the early Christians. This sharing is not to be mechanically administered either by the State or the Church or a Christian organisation. We cannot make people share things like this together but the call is to share. Loving each other through the work of the Holy Spirit is not some mere emotional feeling at a certain point, but it is the practical outworking from that love into the practical things of life. Rejoice with those that rejoice, weep with those that weep. bear each other's burdens. This cannot be separated from the bearing of the burdens of the full man - economic, psychological. Emotional, moral, social, etc. among the brotherhood of those who have become brothers because they have a common Father

Fourthly, while the Bible makes plain that there are two humanities, (those who are saved, and those who are not saved): it equally makes plain that there is one humanity. We are two humanities ethically, morally, in relationship to God, in a fulfilled purpose. But in the structure of what man was made originally, there was a unity of man. We are of the same flesh and bones. If there is to be a fulfilling of the purpose of our creation it will also be exhibited in this: our love will not stop at ourselves. It will flow out in the most practical of forms to all those who are my kind. It will most certainly express the gospel to our lost generation. Here is the context of evangelism. This is the fulfilment of the purpose of our creation at his era and this time of the moving reels of history.

¹ This is an edited version of a lecture given by Dr Schaeffer. The original lecture is available on cassette (number XI60) from: The Manor House, Greatham, Liss. Hants GU33 6HF UK; phone 01420 538436.