

About this book

In *This Building Fair*, the writer has drawn upon an accumulation of many years of reading, experience, discernment of human character, and the riches of true theology.

Only those who appreciate a menu of stories, poems and essays will want to read the book. For others it is a book to be warned against, since it has been written for thoughtful people. For light and scatty minds this volume will be unattractive. For those who are only 'tactile', i.e. always warring to 'feel' things, the book will not appeal.

For those who desire to enrich themselves with truth the book should have great appeal. Thoughtful reading is rewarding, not only in the immediate acquisition of knowledge, but in the gaining of wisdom.

Whoever wishes to read the book should first peruse both the Foreword and the Contents pages, and then see if he-or she-can resist it.

Geoffrey Bingham is an Anglican minister. His experience as soldier, prisoner of war, farmer, missionary, writer, teacher and family man, as well as theologian, has given him grounds for writing material which is Australian in tone, and relevant to the society in which we live. Some have found his books life-changing.



This Building Fair

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GEOFFREY BINGHAM

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THIS BUILDING FAIR

GEOFFREY BINGHAM

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FOREWORD

THIS PRESENT volume is an attempt to work out the theme of its title essay and its accompanying poem, 'This Building Fair'. The 'Building' is, of course, the church, but not a church simply typified by a local congregation and its ecclesiastical buildings, but that miracle and mystery planned by Christ when he said, 'I will build my church'. The New Testament writers delight to show it as the warm palpable body of Christ in which all its members are interrelated and interdependent. To them it is the Bride, the Flock of Christ, the 'Building Fair' which is composed of living stones, bonded together as a dynamic Temple which is not localised—though it has its local manifestations—but which works across all lands, penetrates into all systems of thinking and living, sets forth the worship of God uniquely, and is 'the house of prayer for all nations'.

The implications of this 'Building Fair' are many, and they are wonderful. They also confront the entirety of our human living on this planet. The confrontation is historical, functional, spiritual, and moral. The church is the

creation of the Triune Godhead, and its goal is the glorification which God will give to it, by means of which it will for ever glorify God as ‘a kingdom of priests’.

In this book, then, I have tried to work out some of the implications of the living church, and some of the ramifications of its operations. The long essay on ‘Knowing the Kingdom’ has been written to show the nature of the Kingdom of which the church is the present agent in this world. The Kingdom of God is powerful in itself, being the active sovereignty of God working out in history, and yet the church has been chosen to proclaim it via ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom’. For that reason we need to clarify the nature of the Kingdom in our minds, and come to participate in it in our living. Some may find the essay tedious because of its length, but it should prove worthwhile to persist in reading it. The personal nature of being God’s people—as the church—is worked out in essays such as ‘Man and His Holiness’, ‘The Justified Men and the Great Peace’, ‘What was, and is, and is to Come’, and ‘All Things are Yours’. Again, these essays make demands of persistence and application upon the reader. Basic to the theology of the book is the essay entitled ‘The Blood’.

This Building Fair is the fifth in a list of titles which have a strong Christian flavour, and are composed of essays, stories and poems. The format of essays, stories and poems is really a pioneer venture, and has been well received. This is perhaps because its different ingredients appeal to differing tastes. In these books—including the present one—are stories which in fact are didactic. They teach something under the guise of seeming fiction, and by the aid of a certain irony of writing which is ‘tongue-in-cheek’. There are also poems, and in my estimation poems

are one of the best mediums for communicating theological truth, without being tied down to proofs, footnotes and documentation. Although theology is certainly of the mind yet it is primarily of the heart, and the richest human communication is that of heart to heart.

I keep saying in various Forewords that in these present decades we are declining in our reading. This is generally true. We are conditioned into developing ‘digest’ minds, and if what we read does not immediately stimulate us we become critical of it. If it requires thought and attention we reject it. Many Christians despise the mind and think anything of the intellect is unspiritual. We need minds which will concentrate on reading and study. The very fact that the Bible is a book—or, the Book—should teach us that writing is God’s way of speaking to the human race. So with our writing about the Writings: it should be thoughtful, and express the truth. Laying this truth up in our minds is what makes us rich, especially for the days that will otherwise prove barren.

Really, what I am saying is, ‘Persist with this book. It is not written in an easy, popular style, but do not give up. Try to let the message of the poems, stories and essays come through, and you may find the exercise richly rewarding.’ I am sure that if we ban flimsy reading, light literature, and escapist entertainment, then we may find something of genuine value and lasting effects. It, in fact, can be entertainment at its best level. I trust so, and commend, now, your attention to this variety of items.

Geoffrey Bingham

Dear Father-God

Here, where we seek to adore You,
Here, where the wheels of pain
Come cycling through unfettered memory
And we are slaves again
To torturing thought, recall of sorrow,
And all the pouring accusations
That Evil delights to inflict
In its own comings and never-goings,
We long for the justified peace,
The liberation of repentance,
And the old inflooding love,
The joyful news of forgiveness,
And the wholesome cleansing.

Times are, when in the mind
The ceaseless peace is the true cycle,
The true visitation of Spirit and of truth,
The reassurance of the holy love
That comes and redeems, without conditions
And with great powers.
The spirit eases, the mind relaxes
And one is one with God again.

Often in the night, in the tired times,
The mind works endlessly, the spirit sorrows,

The accusing darts come fiercely
 From some outer space, some place of horror,
 Some conceived torture hitherto unknown.
 It is then the heart wavers, grace seems too vast
 For the heart to warrant. Unwarranted grace
 Is a concept beyond the mind. Only revelation
 Can constrain the heart to receive,
 To believe afresh the vastness
 Beyond even our need.
 How often our tears fall
 In the unseen reaches of the night.
 How often We weep over our lovelessness,
 our returning sin,
 Our sudden upstartings of arrogance and pride,
 The vagrant thoughts that wander
 Into forbidden kingdoms, dreaming afresh
 The dreams we once renounced.
 With burning shame we lower eyes
 That have looked on His glory in delight
 And loved at the topmost pitch.
 Tonight I sit and ponder.
 I weep afresh the tears that scald,
 The flood that heats the heart
 In senseless remorse. The grace-gifts
 Of faith and repentance—these alone
 Can renew the troubled mind and sweep away
 The encrustations of old guilt
 Gathering again to encircle, encapsulate
 And stifle the new true spirit of love.
 Dear Father, in these hours of pain
 Your Spirit of grace visits again,

Laying his cool, cool hand
 On my fevered heart He reassures.
 He utters words of love. Your grace again
 Flows from his firm but gentle touch,
 And I am whole again. My mind sees
 The torturing battle that others always know
 In the same dark reaches of the night
 Or the ghostly dawn, pale with the pain
 That visits—time and again, and ruthlessly—
 The beleaguered spirit. Oh gracious Christ,
 Your intercession liberates! Oh ceaseless Spirit,
 Your inward praying releases me
 And all my ilk who weep for inner sin
 And daily failure in the things of holiness.

Dear grace that gave its only Son,
 That bled its heart out on the Cross of pain,
 That lay in death to bring us life,
 And rose to kill the pain of guilt,
 The dread of death, the guilty mind,
 And make all new again. Oh Holy One,
 My heart is gripped afresh by love.
 Let me then up to my latest breath
 Tell all of grace, and all of love,
 And all of holy peace: tell all of love to come,
 And grace of glory, of glory's grace
 And grace of grace. Here in this now-time Give
 Your children all the power to tell,
 To spell to all the peace of grace and love.
 So then, in the dark clottings of the night,
 The pale reaches of the painful dawn,
 Shall come only the new sight of Calvary's storm

And the peace that follows all.
There our own storms shall be for ever stilled
And the ancient shalom come as a new visitation,
And all our troubled hearts know peace.

TRUE ZEAL WITH TRUE KNOWLEDGE

or,
What Makes a Man Act?

ON THE whole, human beings are fascinated by human beings. They can never learn enough, know enough and understand enough concerning man. We still talk about ‘the mystery of man’. We mean that whilst our research into the nature of man has considerably broadened, yet there is much more to know concerning him. Not only is there a wide variety of human types, racial and cultural patterns, but within each person there is a world which even the subject himself can never fully come to know. Hence we study anthropology, biology, psychology and similar themes, or we just sit—eyes glued to our television screens—looking at documentaries concerning man, or the operas and soap-operas that tell us more about him.

Some are disillusioned regarding man. These are the pessimists, the nihilists, anarchists, and some of them are existentialists, the ones who say, ‘I, myself, am hell!’ On

the other hand, the humanists have calculated objectively— so they say—the measure and capacity of man, and see in him the answer to the world’s problems. Given time and application there is no problem that man cannot solve, no proper kingdom that he cannot build, and no goal that he cannot obtain, with the possible exception of the question of his mortality.

In relation to the matter of man, we have visionaries, idealists, utopists, and a variety of messiahs. All in all, our attention seems likely to be centred on man for yet some time to come.

MAN FILLED WITH MAN

With what else could man be filled—other than with himself? This is modern man’s preoccupation-fascination with himself. The Hebrew would have laughed at the futility of such an exercise. It was a Hebrew psalmist who said,

*Surely every man stands as a mere breath!
Surely man goes about as a shadow’!
Surely for nought are they in turmoil;
Man heaps up and knows not who will gather.*

It was a Hebrew prophet who added,

*All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people is grass.*

The old Prayer Book service for The Burial Of The Dead

echoed in similar vein,

Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.

Modern man has an intense distaste for this ephemeral view of humanity. He assumes that man has within himself that which is worthy of thought and development. Whilst he is silent in the face of his mortality, he has brave things to say about his life and his attainments. And—to be sure—they do appear to have greatness of a sort, i.e. his battles with the elements of history, his holding out against great odds, and his accomplishment of a technocracy which-in turn-promises further brilliant attainments.

But, when the chips are down, and all has been said and done, what-really-is man? What does it mean to be filled with one’s humanity? Does it not simply mean that man moves within the orbit of himself, and that there is nothing beyond him, that in fact all things have their meaning to him in himself?. Given in man’s accomplishments, and his evident intellectual brilliance, what is it that makes a man really to be a man, and, being man, what is he all about?

The Hebrew would have had a simple answer. He would have said something like this: ‘All that is man has its source in God. To be a man is simply to be dependent upon God, i.e. to live and work with Him, and to follow the course God has set out for him. In this principle and exercise, man will know God, will know himself, will know his fellow-man, and even know the creation in which he lives. This is to be human—truly human’.

MAN—CREATED BY GOD— IS A DYNAMIC CREATURE

Man is dynamic—whatever. Whether he chooses to be truly man (i.e. to depend upon God for life and action), or whether he chooses to ‘go it alone’ (i.e. to work within the perimeter of his own resources), man is clearly dynamic. His abilities and capacities are superb. If he is gripped with fear, distrust of himself and others, then he may not act superbly. Yet if he develops to his capacity, even within the orbit of himself, he can present a powerful operation to his fellow-creatures—whether this prove to be good or bad.

The question is whether this dynamism is to any great end, and of any real value. Perhaps one of the most simple yet profound Hebrew statements to be made is that of Proverbs 19:2:

It is not good for a man to be without knowledge,
and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way.

In an intense search to grasp the meaning of the first part of the saying, I have come up with the following translations:

It is not good to have zeal without knowledge (NIV).
Where reflection is wanting, zeal is not good (JB).
Again, desire without knowledge is not good (NEB).
Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good (AV).
It is not good that a man should remain empty of knowledge in his spirit
(free translation of the Urdu Bible).

The not-knowing of the soul is also not good (Keil and Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*)*.

A problem with some of these translations is that they use the words ‘desire’ and ‘zeal’, which are not literally part of the verse. This problem is resolved when we realize that the word ‘soul’ (*nephesh* in Hebrew) is always understood as representing man in his dynamic being. Man does not so much *have* a soul as he *is* a soul, and to understand that means we recognise that man is never static or passive. He is a doing and acting creature, and is moved by his *nephesh* with its innate power and life. Thus in this passage the writer presents a man without knowledge to us, and goes on to say, ‘and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way’.

He means, ‘He who is empty of true knowledge of God, man, and himself will quickly make decisions and impulsively follow them, but for all his desire, energy and zeal he will miss his way in life, either in its small details or its total thrust or-generally-both’. Now this is a statement which we ought to consider carefully, since all of us know how we operate on impulses and lack the knowledge which would have given birth to better—even authentic— decisions and consequent actions.

MAN AND HIS NEPHESEH

In Genesis 2:7 the writer reports, ‘then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being’. Man is made from dust, and that is what he is essentially as a body, but God breathed into him ‘the breath of life’ (i.e. *nishma chiyim*) which is almost the same as ‘the breath of the spirit of life’ (*nishma ruach chiyim*) as in Genesis 7:22, where it refers to all animals

* Vol. vi, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1976, ad. loc.

and birds as well as man. In Psalm 104:29, when God takes away His breath (*ruach*) everything dies and reverts to dust. The two words *nishma* and *ruach* can sometimes be used interchangeably.

When God breathed into man, man became a ‘living being’—a term which is used for animals in Genesis 1:24. We might think, then, that there is essentially no difference between man and the animals. The difference is firstly that God did not breathe into the nostrils of animals, and secondly that He did not make them in His own image and likeness, i.e. give them affinity with Himself; so then, man as a *living soul* and an animal as a *living soul* have a basic difference.

What we are seeking to arrive at—by means of this rather protracted and involved description—is that when God created man He put that knowledge within him which was basic to man being man, whereas the animals were not given that knowledge, let alone the capacity to think as man does. Man as *nephesh* is dynamic in a way that an animal is not. Bodily both are dynamic, but the soul or spirit of man—for sometimes these two terms are used interchangeably—has intellectual, moral and spiritual connotation.

THE NATURE OF MAN AS NEPHESH

It is here we seek to understand man as a living creature related to God, his fellow man, and the creation in which he lives. The term *soul* or *nephesh* covers many-if not all-aspects of man as a living being according to that understanding called ‘Hebrew’.

In its simplest form *nephesh* is concerned with being.

Hence it can mean ‘life’ or ‘self’ as in the term ‘my soul’, i.e. ‘my self’. In Leviticus 17:11 it is said,

‘The life [*nephesh*] of the flesh [i.e. the soul which gives life to the flesh] is in the blood, and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls [*nephesh*]; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life [which is in the blood]’.

That is, the life of the sacrifice—which is in the blood, but which is not the blood as such—is given upon the altar.

This life (*nephesh*) is expressed and lived out in various ways, hence the mention in Proverbs 19:2 of ‘desire’ and ‘zeal’, even though those words are not literally present. To think in terms of *nephesh* is to think in terms of desire and zeal as an emotion and drive. Hence, time and again, we read of the soul desiring, i.e. food: ‘you may eat your *fill* [desire] of grapes’ (Deut. 23:24); and in Psalm 78:18: ‘They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they *craved*’.

Desire (of the *nephesh*) can be good or evil. Whilst ‘the *soul* of the wicked desires evil’ (Prov. 21:10), yet, ‘My *soul* yearns for thee in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks thee’ (Isa 26:9), and, ‘My *soul* is consumed with longing for thy ordinances at all times’ (Ps. 119:20). The sweet desire of the soul for God is part of its natural created—and redeemed—being:

As a hart longs
for flowing streams,
so longs my soul
for thee, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God? (Ps. 42:12).

There are also elements of yearning, so that the maiden cries to her lover, ‘Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock’ (Song of Sol. 1:7). The psalmist cries to God, ‘My soul clings to thee; thy right hand upholds me’ (Ps. 63:8). Deep human love is seen in I Samuel 18:1: ‘the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul’. The soul, then, can cling to God, and can be knit in pure love with another person. So deep is the soul, and so strong its thrust and drive.

Nephesh in fact is the deepest and strongest drive of man for that which he prizes highly. In fact *nephesh* is *him*, and he it. It is not an aspect with him. When he is urged to love God with all his heart (*lebab*) and soul (*nephesh*) and might (me’od), a person is utterly one. His heart and soul and strength are not separate elements which join for one purpose, but are the man in all his being. The ‘heart’ relates to the will or intention, the ‘soul’ to the totality of the self in all its vitality, and the ‘might’ to the emphatic concentration of act, constrained by knowledge and power outside itself, i.e. it is to God.

The soul—as we have partly seen—can be in various states of emotion and affection. In Psalm 86:4 we read, ‘Gladden the soul of thy servant, for to thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul’. The soul can be sweetened by pleasant words (Prov. 16:24), and by true knowledge—a point most apt to our study—verse of Proverbs 19:2 (cf. Prov. 2:10). The soul also knows the joy of praising God (Ps. 103: 1, 2, 22). It is the soul which can be restored (renewed) by God (Ps. 19:7; 23:3; cf. Lam. 1:16).

By contrast, the soul experiences all the bitternesses and sorrows that are common to our human lot. One only

has to look at the references to the word *soul* in a concordance. Hannah was ‘bitterly distressed’—literally ‘bitter of soul’. Job said that the Almighty had made his soul bitter (Job 27:2), whilst Jeremiah (13:17) was so overcome by his people who refused to hear the word of God, that he said, ‘my soul will weep [sob] in secret for your pride’.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE IN THE SOUL

There is much more we might say about *nephesh*, but we have seen enough to know that it is the very being of man, and so what is within the soul is what actuates a human being in life. It is simple enough to say that the person will act not only according to his motivation, but according to his knowledge. If he lacks true knowledge then he will lack true—i.e. wise—action. We see clearly now the thrust of Proverbs 19:2:

It is not good for a man to be without knowledge,
and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way.

That is, the man without knowledge will be compelled—pell-mell—by his soul drives, but will not be wise in his actions. He is really a man who is not in control of himself. The sense of haste comes out of a lack of assurance. Isaiah 28:16 says, ‘He who believes will not be in haste.’ ‘In the New Testament this verse is quoted with translations such as ‘will not be disappointed’, and ‘will not be ashamed’. If a man acts in accordance with soul-knowledge he will be assured he has acted correctly. To ‘make haste with the feet’, or ‘to follow one’s legs’ is the heart of existentialism, and brings its own futility of non-accomplishment.

We mean that when God created man and breathed into him the true ‘breath of life’ from Himself, then the *nephesh* of man was authentic and functional. He had within him—by creation and innocency—the knowledge that would guide, motivate and constrain him in life. To, and in, every human being, the drive of *nephesh* will be common, even though it may express itself in varying ways, but the *knowledge of the soul will be the basis of true* action. Thus we can tightly say, ‘It is not good to have zeal without knowledge’ (NIV), which we may now tightly paraphrase: ‘It is not good to have *nephesh* which is not truly informed by knowledge’. We could add, ‘... for this will make for a hasty spirit, an unconsidered approach to life and action, so that a man misses the true way of life and action’.

Many persons will come to mind—not excluding ourselves—who have acted precipitately and hence foolishly because we have lacked true soul-knowledge, i.e. that which conditions our actions. We think of Cain, whose *nephesh* was dynamic to the point of violence because of the zeal that was within him. It has both a sense of guilt and of injustice. He did not have true soul-knowledge and ‘made haste with his legs’ (in fact with his arm) as he slew his brother. Lamech was another man with force of *nephesh* or the ‘might’ (*muchness*) of it. Samson was a man who moved according to his passion, but he lacked the use of true knowledge as he gradually revealed the secret of his power. In action true knowledge drained away from him. King Saul was a soul-person but moved within its darkness. Temporary and brilliant prophetic illuminations did not give him a steady character. We recognise the mixture that motivated the life of David. He was ‘soulish’

in that he liked life, and was sensual, but at the same time he had a passion for God, and expressed this love both in his actions and his singing. Peter the apostle we acknowledge to be a man who lacked wisdom, but moved powerfully from his *nephesh*.

Three men stand out in greatness of soul, in the Old Testament, namely Abraham, Moses and Jeremiah. In the New Testament there are two different men of the soul, namely Paul and John. We could draw many lessons from them all, but that is not the point of our study. These five men were equipped with true knowledge, even though that had constantly to be taught and renewed within them. For the most part—after their encounters with God—they did not ‘make haste with their legs’, they did not ‘miss the way’.

HOW TRUE KNOWLEDGE COMES TO THE SOUL

We have said that by creation—in their original state of innocence—the primal couple had true soul-knowledge, even soul-wisdom, but this they lost in their fall from that pristine state. Romans 1:19-25 tells the sad story of darkness coming to the human mind and heart, of man still retaining great intelligence but rejecting the truth of God in his depths—indeed ever fighting to suppress it, so that he had become a man with his soul divided, a person doomed never to be secure until he return to God.

It is difficult to discuss the word or thought ‘knowledge’ since we may know things in many ways. In Proverbs 19:2—as in numerous other places—the word ‘knowledge’ is really ‘true knowledge’, i.e. not just the accumulation of

facts, but the knowing of something the way it is essentially.

Basically man needs to know four things, namely God, himself, his fellow man, and the creation. To know them as they are—truly, i.e. ontologically—is to have true knowledge. When man knows them properly then he perceives at the same time the relationships which exist between these four things. Conscience has often been seen as the faculty of co-awareness, i.e. we are aware of ourselves *with* God, of ourselves *with* ourselves, of others *with* those others, and of the creation *with* the creation. Probably conscience would be silent, or simply silently applaud if our awareness were genuine, and our response-in action from that awareness were also true and complete. As it is, conscience sometimes applauds and sometimes condemns.

As human beings we have much awareness that is unconscious. We simply *know* and are content to leave it at that. But then much that we know is wrong. We know wrongly, and do not know that what we know is wrong. *All our knowledge must start at God.*

The translation of Romans 1:28 in the *Authorised Version* says, ‘And even as *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge*, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient’. The truth of Proverbs 19:2 displays itself, i.e. when we refuse the true knowledge—the knowledge of God—our actions are inevitably wrong and even evil, since they spring from us.

Jeremiah 10:23 says that the way of a man is not in himself, but 9:23-24 shows the way a man can go by the knowledge of the Lord:

Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but et *him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me*, that I am the Lord who practise steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord.’

Jesus, on the night of his betrayal (John 17:3), spoke to his Father and said, ‘And this is eternal life, that *they know thee* the only true God, *and Jesus Christ* whom thou hast sent’. Knowing is primarily a relational matter. To *know about* comes from theological deduction, but to *know* comes from a relationship. This idea is fortified in I John 4: 7-10, where John states, ‘he who loves is [has been] born of God and *knows* God. *He who does not love does not know* God; for God is love’.

Again John shares his great insight into the *way* we know God. Since God is love, then we must see Him as love, and we do see Him this way in His coming into the world to give us life through the propitiating act of the Cross. Of course we must see, understand, and participate in that work of the Cross in order to know God as love. By forgiveness we know God’s love and come to know that He *is* love.

Finally, John (I John 5:20) makes the plain statement, ‘And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to *know him* who is true; and *we are in him* who is true. *This is the true God and eternal life*’.

Once we know God, we know ourselves, because we know ourselves through the truth of God imparted to us. We also know others, i.e. insofar as *we need to know* them. We also know the creation because God has revealed both its nature and purpose to us—a subject which we

must leave at this point and save for a future essay. We only need to know God as far as we *need* to know Him, for there is much about God that we may not know in this life, just as there is also much about others we do not need to know. To know is a relational matter, but a relationship is not a thing which is completed and closed off, for it is ever opening up new sights and insights to us.

THE MATTER OF TRUE LOVE AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Paul teaches in I Corinthians chapter 13 that we now know in part, and so we act in part:

For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away... For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

One day we will know even as we are known. Until that time, faith, hope and love will be the three elements in which we will have to live, and love is pre-eminent in this triad. Paul tells us that as we live in love so we mature. He also tells us (I Cor. 8:1) that “Knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up’. The term ‘knowledge’ here is acquaintance with certain facts, which, if love be not present, will be unhelpful and even generate self-pride. He means that love does not use knowledge to benefit oneself, but rather uses it to help others, and build them up.

We will conclude this section of our essay by saying that the knowledge we have is not true knowledge unless

it comes through love, and is for the service of love. Thus to have zeal without love-knowledge is not good for a man, and he will follow his legs and go amiss without that sort of knowledge. How true is this statement!

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

If we accept the thesis that the soul of a man is so dynamic that he must—and will—express it in actions, then we see that it can be dangerous to have zeal that does not lead to true action. We have a strong example of this in Romans 10:14. In this passage Paul speaks of Israel, and says, ‘I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge’ (AV). He then goes on to say (AV), ‘For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God’.

In the above passage we have the principle—wrong as it is—by which countless millions have operated down through the centuries of human history. Ignoring God’s truth, they have established ‘truth’ that is not truth, and ‘knowledge’ that is not knowledge. Acting on the basis of this false knowledge, they have done countless acts of damage to God, themselves, and others. It was incumbent upon them to have true knowledge within their persons—their *nephesh*—before taking any kind of action in life.

Paul puts himself first in this matter of action-in-ignorance. In I Timothy 1: 12 - 17 he related his experience as a zealous Israelite, and said that he is the foremost of sinners because he persecuted Christ and his church, but added, ‘I had acted ignorantly in unbelief. In saying this,

he is telling us that ignorance is culpable, and not excusable. He is also telling us that to have soul-knowledge that is wrong is to bring about action in life that is wrong and which must be judged and punished.

He points out again in Acts 22:3 that he was ‘zealous for God as you all are this day’, i.e. the Jews who now hate and oppose him. In Acts 21:20 Paul is told by some of the brethren that amongst those that have believed there are thousands who are ‘zealous for the law’. The problem this posed we need not examine at this point, but there was certainly something wrong in their soul-knowledge.

We need to ask ourselves at every point, ‘Does my zeal match my knowledge? Am I acting in ignorance, or on impulse, or am I exposing myself to others who do not act from true knowledge, even though they have great zeal?’ Certainly idolaters of old were people of great zeal. This was shown in the wilderness at the time of making and worshipping the golden calf. It was seen in Israel when the conventional worship of the temple was abandoned for the more exciting sex-worship of the *asherah* and Astarte shrines.

Finally we might point to those folk—especially at Corinth—who have been called ‘triumphalists’. Paul did not doubt that there was zeal in the church at Corinth, but he seems to doubt that it has always been well-placed. They have certain attitudes which do not please him, such as their acceptance of incest in their midst, their carelessness in regard to brethren with weaker consciences relating to meat offered to idols, matters of marriage and separation, matters of taking one another to secular law-courts, and the sad matter of party-spirit. They also had a certain pride in their achievements, so much so that Paul

had to use irony: ‘Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!’ (I Cor. 4:8).

These matters cause us to pause and ask ourselves whether our zeal is not merely of nature or of the flesh, and not of the Spirit, for it was Paul who said, ‘Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord’. Zeal must come from the Spirit and never be merely a product of the soul.

KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT ZEAL

Paul, in II Timothy 3:5, speaks of some who are ‘holding the form of religion but denying the power of it’. The context shows that they are not apathetic people. The drive of the *nepshesh* is there, but it is not in godly zeal. Godly zeal is lacking, but with wrong zeal evil action is present.

Somewhat different was Paul’s statement concerning those who talk but have no power. In I Corinthians 4:19 20 he says, ‘I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ‘For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power’. This could well be knowledge (talk) but not zeal.

We do not have to search out events of the early church to know of knowledge without zeal. That has been part of the tragedy of having the form of truth, but not its reality. Theology has so often been substituted for the action of truth. God is the living God and His people must be the living, active people—though with knowledge!

The seven letters to the churches in the second and third chapters of the Book of the Revelation reveal both aspects of our essay—'Zeal without knowledge', and 'Knowledge without zeal'. The first church addressed is the church at Ephesus, and whilst it technically had correct doctrine and practice, it lacked the true knowledge which comes from love, for it had abandoned love. Zeal *with* knowledge is predicated of two churches—those at Smyrna and at Philadelphia. Those who-conquer are promised great rewards, but who are 'the conquerors' but those who have zeal with knowledge.

The church at Sardis has the name of being alive but is dead. It must have shown such zeal that those who saw it believed it to be alive, as indeed did its own members, but it was on the point of death. That church then is an object lesson for today, for it may well be that the church which appears to be most living is the closest to death. Likewise the church at Laodicea was rich, prosperous and in need of nothing, but in fact its state was the opposite. In both these cases we appear to have 'zeal without knowledge', and perhaps—to some degree—'knowledge without zeal'.

ZEAL WITH KNOWLEDGE: KNOWLEDGE WITH ZEAL

True zeal is first found in God, and then in His faithful people. 'The zeal of the Lord will do this', was a statement on the lips of Isaiah (II Kings 19:31; Isa. 9:7; 37: 32). God's zeal was always according to knowledge. The Hebrew words for zeal and jealousy are really the one, i.e. qinah, but their application differs somewhat When God is

zealous for His reputation, He is naturally jealous of anything which interferes with it. References to His jealousy should therefore be closely studied.

It all follows—does it not?—that because God has all knowledge, His actions will always be inspired by true zeal acting out of true knowledge. Perhaps we should not even be talking about God this way, for He is God, but the true man has true zeal and true knowledge. Thus, when Jesus drove the racketeers and their stock out of the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers, 'His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me" ' (John 2:17; cf. Ps. 69:9). They saw his zeal in so many ways, but never did Jesus 'hasten with his legs and miss the way'.

When we read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and various autobiographical passages in Paul's life, and then, down through the centuries, the accounts of zealous men and women of God, we see that had there not been godly zeal (cf. II Cor. 7:11 - 12; 9:2; Col. 4:13, AV) nothing would have happened. There would have been no people 'zealous for good works', unless the zeal of the Holy Spirit had been in believers, along with the true knowledge that gave them true direction.

THE ZEAL THAT DIVIDES

This is one of the saddest aspects of our subject that we could undertake. God's people—sadly enough—have a history of misplaced zeal, i.e. zeal not according to knowledge. In the division of the Corinthians into 'parties', Paul could only see fleshliness, i.e. carnality. He saw that

devotees of certain teachers were limiting themselves to one view—not that the teachers themselves were party figures or sought men and women to follow them! The zeal of such parties was not in doubt, but that very zeal became the cause of division. Without going into the elements of party-spirit, we must conclude that the richest of the aspects of truth can divide. The truth itself—i.e. God Himself, who He is and what He does—can be no cause for division, but the zeal for a cause has been a common—though sad—phenomenon of man since Cain and Abel.

We do know that it is out of a sense of insecurity that men and women band together into parties. They lay the responsibility of truth on their leaders, and they develop certain practices in worship and life, as well as forms of the faith in doctrine, and feel secure only within these. The more secluded and yet the more persecuted a group, the more zeal it seems to generate. Is it that this soul-zeal has always wished for self-expression and now it finds its ideal conditions in the party situation?

Whatever the case, this zeal has to be recognised as being without true knowledge, where that is the case. The hatred that can be generated, the pride that can grow, and the ambition that can flourish tell us it is a zeal which divides. It is not love in its operations, and the fruit of the Spirit is absent.

THE ZEAL THAT UNITES

Now we come to the crux of our study—'The zeal that unites'. There is only one zeal that unites: love. We speak

of God's love and not ours. We speak first of the love that God had—and has—to us who were not righteous or good, but sinners and how in due time Christ died for the ungodly—whilst they were sinners!

We speak of the love of God which grips and constrains us as it forgives, purifies, justifies, and adopts us as sons. We speak of that love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We love because He first loved us. We love Him, yes, but we love others, and we love them not with our own love but with His.

This is the love which 'bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things'. This is the love which 'never fails'.

I think we have rushed over the matter of God's love. I think we imagine we have love in our hearts when in fact it is absent. I think we believe love to be 'easy tolerance' or 'pity for the failures', when in fact it is a holy love which went to the Cross to burn out sin in the believer, to take away his guilt and shame, and give him 'repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ'.

I think we imagine it is permissible to fight our brethren on any and every score, so that when we differ with them we can divide from them, criticise them, fail to love them, anti in fact dislike them and cut them off from us. Oh yes, we have a zeal for God, for His church, for His doctrines and for His practice, but what of our zeal for loving Him and others? Not to love others is not to love Him—let us make no mistake. John in his First Epistle has a watertight argument on the principles I have just nominated. Zeal without love, i.e. zeal that uses gifts without love, gives its body to be burned and its goods to the poor, and removes mountains by faith but not in love—so that all

these actions constitute ‘zeal without knowledge’. They are—as the Anglican collect once said—‘nothing worth’.

True zeal is true love in action. It is that true knowledge which we have received from the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (John 16:12-15; I John 5:7), and which John calls ‘the anointing which teaches us all things’. Where love has come, there the anointing has come. Where the anointing has come, there the truth has come. Soul-knowledge is really Spirit-knowledge, and the sum of this knowledge is ‘Love’.

Let us then have zeal with knowledge, and knowledge with zeal. Let us go out on the path of love, in the action of love, for this constitutes true knowledge and is the power of true zeal. Let us gladly lay aside zeal without knowledge and the numbing knowledge without zeal, and let us be zealous for Him and His word—He who is the Lord and will accomplish it in us.

Return My Zeal

Give me back my burning zeal,
Give me back the fire I knew,
Cause me to rise again in faith,
And cry the message of Your love.

Let not the pining of my heart,
The hurts that made my soul withdraw,
Be counted as real in that great day
Nor be a mountain in my sight
That now I cannot climb.

Faith takes the hill, removes the pile,
Restores the inner fire to burn again
Until the nations of the world
Have heard the message of their God
That He has saved their souls.

Forgive the dimming of that flame,
The sinking down to ashes grey,
Breathe with Your Spirit into it
And make the fire become the blaze
Consuming all my love of ease.

Come down, great Spirit; once you came
 And caused the flesh of me to glow,
 Inspiring heart, enflaming mind
 Until I saw beyond these eyes
 The conquest of all evil powers.

I saw the conquest of our hearts,
 Once bent on evil and on sin,
 Now gripped by love, by pure love
 That conquers death arid hell itself
 Until mankind itself be free.

Come down, dear Lord, in pity come,
 Renew the fire until it glow,
 Until my voice cry out again
 To all the nations of the earth,
 'Repent and find your God,
 Repent, believe, look up, receive.
 Messiah the Lord of heaven and earth
 Will pardon to eternity,
 And give his own new birth.'

ODE TO A TOMATO PLANT

THE ROMANTIC Poets set themselves to write odes to many things, such as Grecian urns, skylarks and deceased fellow-poets.

I have for a long time desired to write an ode to a tomato plant, or to all tomato plants. This is because I have a high admiration for the humble tomato plant, though why I should call it 'humble' I really do not know. I must admit to having a certain humility before a tomato vine, or bush, or whatever you may call it.

My admiration for tomatoes stems from about six decades ago. This was the time when our father taught us—his children—to foster small gardens. I had a mixture of flower and vegetable plants, and as the years went by—especially after marriage—I tended to grow vegetables. I greatly liked to plant tomatoes.

Any tomato grower will tell you that this species of vegetable (strictly speaking it is a berry-fruit) is satisfying in almost all respects. That is why anyone with the soul of a poet within him will want to write an ode to his favourite plant. Since I find difficulty with the form of the ode, I have settled for writing an essay about it. One day I may

rise to writing an ode, so that I leave my title now intact, i.e. 'Ode to a Tomato Plant'. This insignificant Cinderella Essay may one day become a Princess Ode.

Nov. to get back to the tomato plant itself: you may know that it is of South American origin, and that it was considered poisonous and not to be eaten, but the marvellous discovery that it was and is unpoisonous and a delicious fruit for salads and sandwiches, has made it to be one of the most popular of produce throughout the world.

My passion stems not from its taste, or even its obvious beauty, but from its incredible adaptability. No matter how much you prune, cut, chop or misshape the tomato plant, it will rehabilitate itself in no time, and in wonderful ways. Strictly speaking, it is a vine, and left to itself will run all over the ground. It will send up innumerable shoots towards the sun, and cause them to flower and bring forth fruit.

If it is not left to itself then it will be trained on to stakes or some form of trellis. To have an upstanding—though supported—sine, you need to form one or more basic stems, pinching out the laterals which shoot from those stems. The plant knows how to send out its flower shoots and sprigs at certain intervals. Left alone, these produce the fruit. If the tomato is planted in rich soil then there is almost no limit to the size of a vine into which it can grow. If the plant is fed and watered continuously at the root or through the leaves, then there is almost no limit to the amount of fruit it can bear. If the number of flowers is judiciously limited, then there is almost no limit to the size to which the tomato can develop. Some growers take pride in the number of tomatoes they can produce, and

others in the size of the fruit.

It is often thought that tomatoes grown in hothouses are less tasty than those from uncovered gardens. This is a fallacy. All a hothouse does is to provide warmth for the plant to grow and be fruitful. Often the sweetness of a tomato depends upon its variety, but mainly upon the richness of the soil.

At this point of my writing I realize that I am not so much composing an essay as I am shaping up an article for a gardening manual. Necessary as it may be to give these basic details, I now wish to open my heart and my imaginative mind and tell you how deeply tomatoes have affected me over the years.

I tell you, for example, that for years I grew tomatoes which came from thin and miserable plants. Some of them were diseased. How tragic to see a plant grow and then wilt away with fungus diseases. How disappointing to see fruit borne that was hard and inedible. What, too, of fruit that was first eaten by certain insects, had patches of bruising, and finally the infected fruit collapsed like messy balloons—and that not without a rank smell! So low can one's tomato-growing fall! How many sad nights and days I endured, sure that for my uncertain sins I was unable to grow reasonable fruit

Surprisingly enough there would be the good years when the fungus did not attack, when cutworms and other caterpillars took a holiday from my garden, and when the fruit grew first green and full and shiny, until one day it came to blushing pink or a strong rich red or brilliant crimson. Then my heart was filled with joy.

Tomatoes were heaped up in buckets, pans and boxes all ready for preserving, for soup-making, and for chutney and pickles. Those were great days—to say nothing of feminine praise and adoration! Even so, behind all that joy and delight still lurked the sad apprehension of a bad season to come.

You probably know that the judicious use of sprays and manufactured dusts can keep down the incidence of disease and insects. You also probably know that today the use of these things is frowned upon by many. Poisons can accumulate in the soil, and they can adversely affect human health. It is a kind of special accomplishment to grow healthy tomato plants and fruit without insect or disease. How, then, can one accomplish this?

Ideally the best way to grow good tomatoes is by enriching the soil by the use of organic manures, well-rotted compost, and either constant tilling or just allowing the tomatoes to grow in a layer of untilled organic materials. If the soil is annually fumigated by methane gas under a plastic cover, or in the hothouses themselves, then the tomatoes are given a good headstart on diseases and insects. They can become so strong and rich as plants that they can throw off anything. So much for good tomato growing.

Now to the essay proper, and let there be no divergences!

It is the tomato plant itself that I wish to examine, understand, and share with you. Ignorant as I was, I used to think the plant could easily be crippled and even destroyed. I thought that my bumbling efforts at pruning would handicap it, and I might lose most of the fruit I

would greatly envy the experts in the way in which they grew strong vines which produced rich and heavy hands of young, green berries. Even so, the growers would assure me that some years the vines grew so much fleshy growth that they produced little fruit. They, too, had their apprehensions. They, too, knew something of the curse upon the land which produces great crops of weeds, insects and various diseases. They had to keep up an unending battle with these elements.

Times came, even to me, when in a riot of growth the burgeoning tomatoes took off in a wild spree of growing. Simple laterals quickly became main branches, and those branches produced laterals which produced laterals until the hothouses were like rain forests in their luxuriant growth, and I battled the giant output of branch and foliage until I thought the crop would break through the large plastic houses, spilling out beyond containment. I was anxious for a time lest it be all leaves and no flowers, but the plants were scornful of my little faith and produced such fruit as put me to shame. Ah! Such are historic tomato times and seasons!

Now let us suppose—in our mind's eye—that we are at some superb banquet. A great feast of celebration is taking place, and every food imaginable is on display and available. However, there are no tomatoes! Can you imagine that? No, you cannot! Let us suppose our eyes can rove to and fro upon the earth, in every situation and circumstance, and no tomato exists anywhere. Can you imagine that? No, you cannot.

Now let us imagine not only this one great banquet but many, many banquets. Let us suppose that throughout the earth great banqueting is in evidence, and tomatoes

are present in abundance. They attend all dishes, meat and vegetarian. They are there in their thousands, their rich and shining fruits are of colours pink and rosy, red and crimson, and even of yellow, toning down to white— for such tomatoes are extant in our human history. There are large fleshy tomatoes which need two hands to lift but one of them. There are tomatoes of sensible, normal size, and yet others that are like bells in their shape, rich and succulent, and they flanked by yet smaller tomatoes, some no larger than pebbles, and some as the smallest of pebbles.

Your mind has now taken flight. You are visualising this world's wealth of tomatoes. They are everywhere in cartons and cases, stacked high in trucks and lorries, pantechinons and semi-trailers and even in long road and rail trains. There are tomatoes in their millions, spilling out to the markets of the world, stacked in shop windows and displayed on market and street stalls, whilst everywhere there are selling and buying agents, purchasers and vendors, and those manufacturers busy canning them in their millions of containers, whilst housewives and workers are bottling them for the long, lean winters, making varieties of tomato soup, of relishes, of chutneys and pickles, all the while exchanging recipes, gathering up and mixing their herbs and spices as a kind of homage to this most royal of all fruit.

Imagine all this, and then ask yourself whether you are not bound to write odes and essays to the glorious produce known as tomatoes.

Come with me now, not to the billions of such fruit as are borne each year on the vines—whether on stakes, wires, trellises, or just upon the good earth—but come to

the one simple tomato plant itself. Look! It is set to fight the curse brought upon the earth by man's sin, and to yield its goodness even in spite of that curse. Subjected as it is to creation's universal futility, yet it makes its way up through the soil as a seedling. It shoots out its branches, yet submits to the pruning of the grower. If he pinch out too many laterals, then it creates a miracle of generating new and effective laterals. If it runs out of laterals it will turn even leaves into flower-producing units. If the wind, the rain and the hail thrash its vine in sudden storm or fury so that it breaks, then it effects its own knitting of the fracture it has sustained. If some of the vines be smitten with disease or marauding insects, yet another portion of the field will fight on stubbornly, producing the precious fruit. If water be denied it will struggle to the last, and if it be flooded it will miraculously escape a total rotting, still yielding something or other to the hungry grower.

Ah, yes! It is a plant to amaze you, whether it be in a single decorative pot or be growing in multi-acres and destined to be harvested by huge machinery. What other crop is there that battles so persistently and magnificently? What other fruit is so common to all foods that are prepared, yet rich and unique in itself?

I tell you I have only begun this essay—wretched and pathetic as it is in its inability to describe the whole—and my mind is so caught by the magnificence of a simple fruit that I could write an ode to it, yes, an ode—a rare and wonderful ode.

Even if today I lack the ability to write that ode, yet written it shall be, and in that day the world will know how magnificent a gift it is that God has given to the earth, and all mankind shall respond to my ode and unspeak

ingly fete the fruit it has at last come to admire—not taking it for granted, but expending itself in more and more odes, songs, poems, ballads, stories, and ascriptions of praise and wonder, whilst it partakes of tomatoed foods of every kind, of dishes, relishes, soups and pickles, until the word ‘tomato’ itself shall be a paean of joy and satisfaction even in the face of the curse, and the coming of the glorious liberty of the emancipated human race.

I Saw the Pale Burning

I saw the pale burning of the river,
The sheer sheen of the stretched water
Aflame with the silver burning,
The white flame of the glowing strip
Taking its life from the Sun.

I thought as I saw the metallic beauty,
The proud undiminished trickery’ of the brilliant sun,
That the eternal beauty manifests itself
In rich quirks of creational humour,
As in the silver flashings
Of this momentary water.

Somewhere in the flowing depths of me, also
Was a pale burning, an equivalent river,
A chuckling stretch of sheer shining.

THE BLOOD

— One —

AROUND HIM were all the noises of war. Shells were screaming overhead, some of them crashing into trees and thumping as they burst. Machine-guns were spluttering and chattering, an incessant yammering that rose and fell. Mortars hurtled and whistled through the trees, arched and fell, whilst their shrapnel burst upwards and outwards to do its lethal work. There were other noises, too, those of single shots fired or the splatter of sound from the tommy-guns. There were human cries, sudden and fierce, high or moaning.

He had fallen on the road, one leg shattered at the thigh. In the early dawn he could make out the sight of his blood, a shiny stream edging its way from his limb, working across the black bitumen to the edge of the narrow highway. He could hear the 'Crrumph!' of mortars breaking below the road, even in the place where the *enemy* machine-gun nest had been. He knew there were dead enemy in that position, and doubtless their corpses shook

and shuddered with the impact of the mortars. He himself was sheltered from the shrapnel, but he knew anything might invade at any moment.

His mind was very peaceful, for he knew no fear of death. The pain at first had been more of shock than agony, and then it had been agony intense. Some diminution of pain had taken place as the blood had flowed, and he was learning to live with the pain as it was. If he had a problem, it was the thought of snipers in the tall trees. One movement from him and the sniper would have him between his gun sights, and in another moment he would be dead—one with the silenced enemy in the machine-gun nest.

The sounds of war shifted from where he was, receding into the enemy lines, and for some moments there was utter silence. He swore to himself that he heard a bird singing, and indeed a yellow flash passed above him. The blue of the sky began to appear, and the sun shifted in silently, gaining pace and space across the feathery leaves of the plantation trees. On the road his blood still flowed.

He looked at it with disinterest. His shattered leg seemed to be no part of him, and his blood was alien to him. It was an entity with its own action. Memory stirred in him and he thought, 'Given enough flow of blood, and enough loss to me, and I will be dead.' Perhaps even now he was clinically dead, even though he felt very much alive. He kept still—not wanting to catch the attention of a sniper.

Smoke drifted from the burning oil-wells, and with it the sun was partly covered. The world grew strangely silent, and he knew the snipers had gone, retreating to their own lines of war. He felt the throb of pain, and

waves of cold and heat pulsed across him. He felt tired, and knew he might soon sleep for ever. The red, wet line made its way across the road. He remembered the stuck pigs back in the abattoirs at home, and their shrieks as the blood spurted and ran and flowed. Even so, he had never seen blood like his own. His eyes were tiredly riveted to it.

Then there was a sudden explosion of noise. It was the cries of his team-mates. He saw their immense sorrow, and felt their tenderness as they lifted him from the road. Someone was placing a ligature around his thigh. Then they were placing him in the back of the army truck, and the backboard was chained at the level so that he could have its extension to take his leg. He had been placed on top of other wounded—half on one and half on the other. The wounded did not protest, but they made feeble jokes. One was a fellow-Aussie, but the other was an Indian, shrill with his personal pain. He could see the tears of his mates as they waved him off to the hospital.

At the hospital they fussed carelessly over him. The sister sought to find a vein, but the venation system had collapsed. After a time they found a vein, and began to pour blood into him, first into a beaker which was connected intravenously by means of a glass needle. An orderly kept pouting blood into the beaker, and it made its way down the glass tube and needle. He watched the renewal of his life by this gift of blood.

‘Easy go’ did not mean ‘easy come’, for soon his chest felt a frightening pressure. Doubtless blood was entering the places of loss, and suddenly he cried out, afraid lest his chest should burst. The new unbidden experience was terrifying. His leg began a new burst of powerful pain. He shook with spasms.

They said, ‘Don’t worry. This is how it has to be. If we don’t hurry we’ll lose you.’

The sister smiled as though he were the last thing or person she would wish to lose. He smiled back gamely, thrusting down the terror within him.

She said, gently, ‘You’ll have to wait some time for the anaesthetic. We mustn’t operate immediately.’

He waited with longing for the anaesthetic, knowing the pain would die as he slipped into oblivion. Meanwhile he must feel the increase of pain with the gift of blood.

He thought a lot—oh, ever so much—about the gift of blood. Somewhere, sometime, he had heard a saying, ‘The life of the flesh is in the blood’. Now he knew.

The Law had said, solemnly,

— Two —

‘If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For *the life of the flesh is in the blood*; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life... For *the life of every creature is the blood of it*’.

The Hebrew word used here for ‘life’ was *nephesh*, and it describes man as ‘a soul’, for in creation God formed man of the dust of the earth and breathed into man’s nostrils ‘the breath of life [*chaiyim*]’, and man became ‘a living soul [*nephesh*]’. ‘The life of the flesh is in the blood’ can be translated, ‘The soul [*nephesh*] of the flesh is in the blood’. This really means that the soul was that which gave life to

the flesh, so that when the blood was outpoured the soul departed, not giving life to the flesh any more.

Blood, then, is not to be treated lightly. Indeed life is sacred, whether it be of an animal or a human. The pouring out of blood was the pouring out of life. One may eat the flesh of an animal, but not its blood, i.e. not its life. That life was always to return to God who created it. Following the Flood, the word of God, concerning the shedding of blood, was, 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image'. To attack a man is to attack the image of God, and it is to strike at God Himself!

Blood was very precious. If the blood of any creature was shed, it was to return to the earth, and it was to be covered by earth. The blood of slain Abel cried to God from the earth—it was Abel himself crying to God. Then there was the blood of sacrifice.

This was a mystery, and still is, but behind it lies the nature of God. The simplicity of it was that life had to be taken and given for a human being—before God. The awesome reality of God's holiness, and the affront human sinfulness offers to that Holy One, makes the price of purification to be the giving of life.

Man did not institute sacrifice. It was a gift of God. Had sacrifice not been enough it would not have been given, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life'.

He had seen his blood flowing down the black bitumen of the road, and knew that soon the life would have flowed out of him.

Life given in sacrifice has saving power.

—Three—

It was a military hospital into which had come the casualties. Most were blackened in face and arms and legs, and their khaki had turned to the same black, and all of it from the oil-wells that had been bombed. No part of the island was free from the thick oily smoke. Some of the incoming men were unshaven from days—and even weeks—of fighting. They had made their way down the peninsula, and all the time the Zeroes overhead had harried them.

Some of them had been wounded in the bombing, and others by the intense barrage of enemy shells. They were battle-weary. They were attended to, in ward and theatre. The beds filled up. The staff worked without thought of regular shifts.

Then the enemy came, and cruel and rapacious he was. The troops were conscripted, and it seemed that they were under the stimulus of false courage engendered by drugs. They broke into the hospital, ignoring the Red Cross signs. They poured into the wards, and overran the theatres. Their commands were short, angry barks. They knew nothing of the Geneva Convention, or if they did then they ignored it.

All walking wounded were to go to the slit trenches that had been provided as protection in air raids. Those who were well, who were nurses or orderlies, who were workers-in-support—all were to line up.

They were shot down by machine-gun to the sounds of guttural cries of anger and hatred. They were bayoneted in the slit trenches. The blood of massacre flowed everywhere. It flowed in the operating theatre as the doctors and assistants were savaged. An orderly slipped and fell,

and a doctor was bayoneted over him. As he fell, the doctor said, 'Don't move. They'll see my blood, and they will think you dead.'

The non-combatant medical worker lay still. The enemy came with grunts and cries, and sought to find the living. There were no living. A dreadful massacre had taken place. The orderly lay still, not daring even to quiver, and there was the officer's body over him, and the blood of this saviour kept him in life.

He was saved by the blood.

—Four—

She lay in the mission hospital. The sisters in their white habits were nuns, but most competent as doctors and nurses. She lay there, awaiting her operation.

Her husband was at the Christian University College, and the six children had been shared with two families. She wondered how they were going. All the time her mind was filled with thoughts of them.

She liked the quietness of the place. There was no sense of hurry, of fuss or fret. She could close her eyes and contemplate the past months, and even years, of busyness. It seemed they had always been on the move—in parish life, and then in missionary life. There had been the packing, the farewells, the long journey by sea, the surprise and shock of a new culture, and the sickness that had come to some of the children. She wondered about the operation that was to come.

She was a woman of faith, indeed of deep faith. She could remember back over many years, and faith had

always been there. Now she was having faith for the surgery she was about to undertake. She was glad of the people who loved and supported her. She liked the wit and humour of the children and of her husband.

When they brought her back from the theatre all seemed to be right. For months the tumour within her had sapped her strength. Now it was gone. A renewal of life stretched before her. The days passed and she started to strengthen. On the eighth day, as she was walking around, it happened—the terrible haemorrhage. They attended her with every care possible—took her to theatre, tied off the vein, and brought her back with the usual transfusions. She knew, as a nurse herself, that she was in terrible danger, but she lacked the fear she knew she ought to have.

They tested the level of her haemoglobin. They said nothing to her, but the nun who was her doctor spoke to her husband, and she could see the news troubled him. He too—like her—was a person of faith. He and others had prayed when two of the children were at the point of death from a strange disease. She knew he would go and pray.

He was tender to her, but when he left he was wrapped in quiet thought. His prayer was supportive. Even so, the haemorrhage continued, and it seemed there was nothing they could do which was effective.

They asked whether her husband could give blood, and she said, 'Yes.' There was an Irish priest, too, who was prepared to do that. There was a Muslim also who agreed to give his blood, an unusual offer on that Indian sub-

continent. Even so, the donations of blood did not seem to strengthen her.

She realised she was not in the bed. She was somewhere above it, looking down at her own body, and the team who were working on it. The Mother Superior below her was praying. They had only had one other similar case, in all the history of the hospital, and she had been the fourth wife of a Muslim land-owner.

It seemed strange to her, as the time passed, to know that she was a Christian missionary with a Muslim's blood in her; that she was a Protestant wife and mother with an Irish priest's blood supporting her life. She was glad that her husband had given her life, too, by his blood. Later that night the doctor tested and re-tested the blood count, and next day talked to her and her husband.

Clinically she had been close to death. Then a miracle had taken place. Suddenly her blood count had increased to the safety mark, and there was no accounting for such a radical change. She and her husband were grateful. The very evening before, he had received a letter from a missionary who had been told that God had said He would work a miracle through the bleeding body of the missionary mother and wife. The nun said, 'It is a miracle of prayer! It is a miracle of God!'

A dying priest was in another room, a single private ward, and they could not staunch his blood. He had been operated upon for an ulcer, and after he had returned from theatre the haemorrhage had begun. They had transfused blood, but with no result.

The nun who was a doctor told the missionary couple

the story. 'We operated when we knew it was dangerous, but we had to do that. It was do that or let him die. Now we dare not open him up again, for that would mean certain death. If, however, we leave him as he is then he will die. So much extra blood is given to him, and we do not feel it is right to use more.'

The nun looked at the missionary couple. 'Your prayers seem so effective,' she said gently.

The husband nodded and said, 'Let us pray, now.' She lay on the bed, her health assured. Her husband and the nun knelt together at her bedside, and they prayed. After the prayer the doctor was called in to the priest. He was praising God for what had happened—the haemorrhage had ceased. The gifts of blood were taking their effect.

Saved by blood and prayer!

— Five —

The Jewish leaders had taken counsel together and the high priest had said, in their midst, 'It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.'

So they led him away to a place called 'Golgotha', or 'the place of a skull'. This place was also called 'Calvary' and it was the summit of a small hill. Blood flowed in a terrible way when this Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, and with him two thieves. He refused the pain-killer offered, and had to listen whilst the two robbers who were crucified with him vilified him, cursing and blaspheming. His prayer for them—and for all others—was, 'Father,

forgive them; for they know not what they do.’

It has sometimes been said that to speak of ‘the power of the blood’ is to be rather crude. It has also been said that some teaching of the Cross depicts a *bloodthirsty* God. That is as may be. God is a *blood-giving* God, and were that not necessary, then there would have been no such wastage of what is precious. Blood is a high cost, indeed the highest, and it costs the highest to redeem man from his slavery to sin, his captivity to evil, and his huge indebtedness to the holy and irreversible law he has broken.

Through the centuries the people of Israel viewed the drama of blood-letting in the sacrifices of bulls, of sheep, goats and birds, and none of it was the object of joking. Life was sacred, and the life of the flesh derived from the blood. A man’s soul was one with his blood.

Nor were these people crude and ignorant. They knew—at heart—that blood of bulls and goats could not wash away sin, but they knew that God would provide Himself a better sacrifice. This he did in the One called ‘the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’. Without being mystical or mysterious we can, then, speak of the power of the blood, the enormous dynamic of the death of Christ, a life taken by violence in which the blood of the Son of Man was shed. His life was poured out on Golgotha’s stones for sinful humanity.

His blood was true blood, human blood, blood which could be tested for its haemoglobin content. When it spattered on the soil at Calvary, it signified life given for those who needed it. From that moment on, the Son of God was to be known as ‘Christ crucified’.

If we look for the power of that blood outpoured and the present ‘Christ crucified’, then we must look for it in

the innumerable lives that have been changed since each was ‘crucified with Christ’. We must see it in ‘the Lamb-as-it-had-been-slain’ of the prophecy of the Revelation, for he alone is worthy to open the seven-scrolled book of history and bring forth the judgements of God, finally defeat and vanquish all evil, and establish for ever the holy Kingdom of God.

This power of the Cross is for ever, but it is for ever only for those who have come to look up at Christ crucified and own him as Saviour and Lord. They will not need to be told about the ‘power of the blood’, for they will know it.

He remembered when his blood had flowed from the wounded leg. Now it was flowing from his nose. The first event had been dramatic, and even somewhat romantic. This nose-bleeding was ordinary and something to be finished with. Two years previously it had happened to him, and his nose had been packed and later cauterised, and he had forgotten the event until a week previously, when it had again bled freely.

He had been playing cricket with his grandson and some of the family. His grandson had knocked up a high score and had seemed satisfied. Himself—he felt the high heat of the day, but enjoyed the social time. When he went to the house the bleeding began. His doctor son-in-law was sympathetic, and so was his wife, a trained sister. Then of course his own wife no less—the one who had haemorrhaged in the mission hospital. She was always

solicitous without being sentimental.

They tried given remedies, and after a time the bleeding stopped. The family left the two grandparents to themselves, and he lay back in his Jason chair and watched international cricket. From time to time a little blood flowed down his throat and sometimes he felt its warm stickiness in his mouth—all of which was repugnant to him. The real bleeding had stopped. He felt a little fuzzy in the head, and he was fired.

When he stood up to go from the room the bleeding began afresh. His wife rushed some towelling material to him, and he knew this time there was no staunching it. The family had advised him to go to the Casualty Ward of the local medical centre. Always a bit of a Stoic, and one who pooh-poohed such things, he had shaken his head dumbly.

Now the flood had come, and blood began to spurt. His wife firmly led him to the car, and he sat crouched in his seat. The towelling was not enough to stem the flow. Large clots had formed at the back of his nose and it was uncomfortable. Breathing was difficult

She backed the car out, and they sped downhill. The slope increased the discomfort and accelerated the flow. Around corners they sped with consummate skill. He began to feel stifled. The blood was filling his mouth, flowing down his throat, and because of this his breathing was impeded. It was not panic he felt, but something akin to it. He wondered whether they would make it to the hospital. Blood was running down his shirt, over his arms, and spattering onto the upholstery of their new vehicle.

He disliked the choking feeling and fought for breath. He now had a pool of blood just beneath his nose, a gory

accumulation of clotting at the back of his nose, and his mouth was filled with its distasteful fluid.

The assistant at the Casualty Ward hurried him into a wheelchair. He was raced to a clinic room, and relieved of his blood-soaked towelling. Clearly it was being treated as an urgent matter, an emergency. An ice-pack was applied to the back of his neck. He had to pinch his nostrils and hold them—it seemed interminably.

Now he could breathe, though not through his nose. That organ was packed with gauze tissue. An intravenous drip was applied to one arm, and he was propped up in a bed where he was to stay for a few days.

It had all been dramatic. It had been sudden. He had no real control over the happening. And in a way it had been serious. ‘The life of the flesh is in the blood.’ His life had been pouring from him, down his nostrils, down his throat and through into his mouth. He had been helpless, and now he was more than a trifle weak. One of them told him seriously, ‘It can be fatal.’

He was not worried by anything which could be fatal, but he sat there, trying to work out how his life could be so vital, how time was so precious to him in telling others concerning eternal life. The stories of war and of peace, of his wife and his family, and of others, came tumbling into his mind.

‘Life disturbed by life outflowing’ was a thought which came to his mind. It unmasked the paralysing trivia of his generation, and ridiculed its mediocrity. He understood afresh people’s distaste for sudden accidents, graphic wars, and objects and events which portended death in any

form. He knew there was no death—not, anyway, for people of faith—but he remembered his confusion at the torrential flow of his own blood. Of course, next time he would be better prepared for any bleeding event.

Nevertheless he lay peacefully in his propped-up situation, relaxed as others cared for him. But his mind was filled with thinking. It was fixed on the nobility of blood, the dignity of man in the image of God, the vast suffering of Messiah, and the power of his death—that is, life taken in violence by the hands of wicked men—and he marvelled both at the mystery of life, and the wonder of death.

He understood afresh the power of blood in a human being—its dynamic and its dignity—and he was grateful for the life that had come to him through creation, and— even more—the life that had come to him through grace.

They Lay Apart

The humanity I saw lay apart,
Each was its own self.
After a time anger came.
It had been there before
But unspoken, unacted.
Now it spoke and it acted,
Flared frighteningly,
And curved venomously.

It was directed against heaven
And also against the earth.
There was blood (human),
Vapour and fire and smoke
And hideous threatening.
Much shot off into the air And vanished,
But the anger remained—
It compounded itself Alarmingly.

There is nothing you can do to reconcile,
Only blood can do that—
Blood of God: blood of man.

The Blood did that in front of my eyes.
 I stared, shocked and horrified
 But also greatly endowed with joy
 I watched all things reconcile
 Into one vast whole.

It was very beautiful but
 Terrifying to dissident elements;
 It achieved an unshatterable wholeness
 Which kept being so for ever.

THE CARS THAT CARRY ON SO!

THERE IS this thing about cars that I have been observing. To my own surprise, I recall that I have been observing cars for over sixty years. As a family we lived on a main highway in one of the northern suburbs of our city. We used to observe this arterial road quite a bit.

They were the days when horse-drawn vehicles shared the highway with motor vehicles. Often dry horse manure would accumulate in wind-blown heaps on the road, and we would gather it for the garden, so that the road was quite useful. Since our parents would pay us for this organic fertiliser, we would dream of a circus coming along the road—with elephants—but sadly enough the animals rarely Walked down the highway.

The vehicles of those days are now (i.e. those that remain) the joy of vintage car owners. Even so, I can still see them in my mind's eye. There were the old 'Tin Lizzies'—the 'A' and 'T' model Fords, very hardy but much despised in our suburb which was quite affluent and highly social. We much preferred stately cars, well-ducoed, trim and modern. In our suburb we had a modest portion of Rolls Royces, Bentleys and others of names

which still avoid me. To be honest I was not much on names and models. My four brothers could easily detect the model and the year of its origin, just by glancing at it. It left me with a deep sense of inferiority concerning cars, vestiges of which still remain with me.

My brothers not only knew the names and makes, but they actually collected the registration numbers of the vehicles. They would sit on our front brick fence and write down the lists. At the end of the afternoon—always Sunday afternoon—they would compare their lists, often with the result that scuffles broke out. One might accuse another of manufacturing car numbers just to win the contest, and I am afraid that this could have been the case in some instances. Anyway, they collected car numbers, and I doubt not that had they kept their lists they would fetch a high price today. Sadly enough they destroyed them.

Seated on the fence with them, I simply looked at the passing vehicles, nearly all of which were noisy. Ford vehicles chattered as they went past. The high open vehicles looked down on us, the lower canopied cars flopped noisily in the wind. Here and there would be a roar of open exhausts, but most vehicles simply clattered by. This of course was the case of lorries and trucks, but you rarely saw them on Sundays. Commercial vehicles—especially in our suburb—were despised for Sunday use. For this reason they were kept at home, or secreted behind the houses of tradesmen. The impression I was given of tradesmen was that they were pretty low, socially. We had a hearty sort of democratic acceptance of them on week days when they brought bread, green-grocers, meat, milk and the newspapers, but there was a distinct ‘hands-off’

element when it came to any suggestion of social relationship, and what went for persons also went for vehicles. Commercial vehicles were definitely out.

I have noticed over the years the clever devices car manufacturers have used to make commercial vehicles into home vehicles so that there need be no shame in using a commercial vehicle for your family. Being brought up in the old school I am not deceived, and I have hardened my heart against this continued deceit. I call anathema down upon those who would so quickly dissolve genuine social distinctions and cause an increase in the present—and disgusting—egalitarianism.

Even so, I recognised the distinction my age placed upon vehicles not used for commerce. A Buick or a Chrysler was a good car. Each had distinctiveness—even if it were not a Cadillac or a Rolls Royce. By such vehicles we could indicate our social status. There were unwritten (and generally observed) laws about the purchase of a vehicle. It was agreed that if you were a working class person you should only purchase a working class vehicle. Unfortunately I cannot rightly call to mind the names of such, but I think they were Fords and Chevrolets, Essexes, Singers and—perhaps—Dodges.

I have seen middle class people buying Bentleys and Buicks, but it was generally agreed that they were cheating. They may even have been called *nouveau riche*, which was—in those days—a term of opprobrium. You were permitted to come into riches but never—never—to display them in any ostentatious way.

Alas, poor Yorick, the times have changed. Any one buys any kind of vehicle without due respect for the true social proprieties. Whereas only the children of rich and

established folk would purchase an M.G. or a Jaguar, now. any Tom, Dick or Mary will buy the sleek and slickest, smooth and underslung model of a car. It is almost impossible to identify true social categories by the type of vehicle a person possesses.

In those days it was not *de trop* to purchase a second-hand vehicle. For example, if you issued forth from your garage and driveway in a shining and polished Buick— which strictly speaking did not belong to your social class—then you were getting a bit above yourself. Granted that it was a second-hand vehicle, you were not—nevertheless—exonerated, since you were *posing* as having a new vehicle. The word simply passed around in the neighbourhood that it was *only* a second-hand vehicle and you really, then, could gain no advantage from having so high and glorious a car.

As I have said—everything has changed. I often muse on these changes. Old brands have passed away, giving place to new. Detroit no longer rules the world—more likely Osaka is the new capital of automobile fame. Social levels —sadly enough—are no longer indicated by the vehicles people drive. Affluent homes use vehicles called 4WDs. Slim and sleek and streamlined models give way to sturdy, stocky automobiles which can scarcely be called ‘cars’ or ‘trucks’, because they resemble all-purpose creations which combine comfort, mobility and the ability to tackle dirt tracks and mountain or bush paths of the most primitive nature. Again, I say, we are bereft of social designation. Democratization of all our social mores and caste categories proceeds at bewildering pace and heedless acceleration.

In saying all of this I ramble. Over sixty years of vehicle observation and use has made me a little mad. Thousands of kilometre-eating driving has driven me more than a little crazy. Beneath my feet has raced an endless mileage, so much so that as a boxer becomes ‘punch-drunk’, so I have become ‘wheel-drunk’. I am therefore ‘driver-drunk’ and my words are not to be heeded. My amassed mumblings are to be despised and ridden underfoot.

I know this assessment to be true, for my mind has lately taken on a strange bent, and this I will explain to you.

I now see guilty cars. You will not believe me, but I tell you I see them. It goes like this: I am driving down a road, even a main highway, and suddenly a car on my left cuts out into the highway just in front of me. This vehicle was on the side road, and it scarcely cared to see me. It took a quick glance, by means of its right head-lamp, at my oncoming pace and—lickety-split—shot out in front of me. Just a trifle surprised but a whole lot indignant, I braked slightly and this here car—now in front of me—shot ahead.

I swear it was guilty. It seemed to crouch forwards— head hunched so to speak—and quickly accelerated as though to get away rapidly from the scene of its crime. If accosted for this crime, if confronted with this act, it would say, ‘Oh, you took so long in coming—tardy vehicle that you are—that I was forced to take the initiative. I could not wait all day (or, all night) for you to come at such leisurely pace, so I acted!’

All of this conversation is but lying self-justification.

My vehicle, too, is a feeling car. Its retort would doubtless be, 'You cars get me! You frustrate me. Here am I, going at a perfectly reasonable pace, i.e. fast but not furious, and you dare to say I am slow and lazy! Fie on you! You shot out of that road without warning—dangerously—and put me in an awkward position, etc. etc.'

I tell you I am believing these days that cars have consciences and condemnations. I have seen incidents such as the one I have just described, and I have seen the thwarted become angry in an incident. It rushes after the offender and is intent upon punishing it. Sometimes it catches up to the guilty vehicle and hangs grimly on to its tail, pursuing it down straights and following it around curves and bends. Often it will hang on doggedly for kilometres before it will let go the chase, as a disgusted Dobermann finally relinquishes the chase. Other times it will catch up the offending vehicle, passing it in the next lane, all the while venting its spleen in silent invective.

I have seen the guilty car stare ahead, saying nothing and acting as though it has done no wrong whatever. At this refusal to show guilt, the plaintiff car will blare its horn quite vindictively if the driver of the car will help it to do so. Some drivers who are scandalised by the sound of a horn refuse to allow their vehicle to express such crude feelings.

I have seen pursuing cars get so angry that they are near to homicidal. They almost buck with indignation, and I have heard some vehicles literally squeal with wrath, smoke coming from their twisting tyres.

Sometimes I have seen penitent cars. Having offended in some way or another they decelerate almost to a halt. They crawl along at a miserable snail's pace. They look

hangdog—to change the figure. Their head-lamp eyes grow round and luminous with sorrow. They seem servile in their sin, seeking to propitiate the vehicle they have offended. Often the offended vehicle forgives, shrugs its side windows—so to speak—and speeds off appeased. The offender has a bit of a grin to itself and now proceeds at happy pace.

All of this tells you how far gone I am—how senile and how decayed. Cars having consciences—indeed! Automobiles embracing guilt—what next? Yet anyone knows it is true. Even police cars pick up the crimes of incorrigible cars and hasten after them to chide or book them. You see such at the sides of roads, silent and sorrowful, whilst the unfortunate drivers stand talking to the police officers, endeavouring patiently to explain the idiosyncrasies of their vagrant and rebellious vehicles. Even police officers nod with a certain amount of understanding, but of course are forced to book the driver with whom the buck stops.

Everyone knows that cars have souls. They have minds which are their own, and wills that are stubborn. Without consulting the victims—their drivers—they rush into all kinds of miscreant acts without remorse or repentance. Callously they involve their helpless and hapless navigators.

The only consolation I know is to go to a wrecker's yard and look upon acre after acre of silent cars. Some are on their sides, some on their backs. Others are parked side by side like grim and silent corpses or even coffins. Their head-lamps—where left intact—stare silently ahead. This is the place of the dead. This is a vast motor mausoleum. Here are interred the sins and crimes of countless cars.

Could these vehicles speak they would have innumerable tales to tell—tales of fierce and happy days, of careless kilometres covered by loving litres of perpetuating petrol or glorious gas. There would be stories of beginning with applause and ending with demeaned dignity. In the automobile world almost all of life ultimately rusts away. Thistles and weeds claim the chastened chassis or capture the deflated tyres and tubes. Rain, hail, sleet and mud work their relentless retribution on these vacated vehicles.

Yes, it is a matter of fierce joy to see the judgement work upon these vehicles which once sped so carefree along main highways, which dashed off into side roads with scarcely a signal, and which secreted themselves behind trees, under car-ports, or in locked garages, that they might somehow save themselves.

As I said at the beginning of this essay, ‘I have been observing cars lately.’ Oh, not just lately, but always. How I sigh for those days of innocence and guile when—seated upon our front fence—I watched the first vehicles of the long and endless saga of car evolution and automobile life. Little did I dream of what was to come! How could I have envisaged a city of foul petrol fumes, of cars halted— bumper to bumper— of kilometres of right-hand or left-hand flickers flicking? What sort of indication was there then in our happy world of childhood?

We knew nothing of the things ahead—life was gracious, calm and pleasant. Yet we grew into decade after decade as cars became sophisticated, sleek and competent. This thing has come upon us as surely and frighteningly as the day of the Triffids. I conclude sadly that we must bear with it in resigned patience.

Well, I do not have much time to spare for further

writing. Our new Honda limousine awaits at the door. My wife touches the melodious horn with a trifle of asperity and I must be away—indeed, ‘up and away!’

Community

Out of the mind of men—
 Hidden in their unawareness—
 The gathering persists, the coming together,
 But more—the being and living together.
 Not for protection, nor the fierce cultic loyalty,
 Or seeking the unknown form, the esoteric truth,
 But because of the sovereign wave,
 The surging understanding that comes
 From the heart that desires the truth;
 To discover its true object, and to discern
 The object of its true self.

In the empty nihilism, the vast nothingness
 In which the spirit seeks to hide,
 There is no covering: grey despair is no true mask,
 Nor is deliberate nothingness authentic being.
 To check the unreality the new truth—
 The invented concocted truth—
 Is obstinate, anti-ontological obtuseness,
 The shattering separation of the constituent parts
 Of innately interfaced being. This is the lie

That fissiparates and disintegrates
 That which is the essential unity.

Looking at them—the true community—
 In the rare worshipping, in the facing adoration,
 The eye-beholding knowledge,
 The keeping of the Eternal in their persistent breasts—
 We could see they shared the faceted reality.
 Deeper than looks, richer than the strong utterance
 They gave, was the union of wonder. They lived
 In the light that was unseen,
 The glory that submerged them,
 And all this without the drowning of reality.
 The great wave that had breasted itself
 In the ocean of the Deity
 Had come to them in the Person, the Sovereignty.
 Spirit and Son were one,
 Bringing the Father, creating the Family
 In the new surge of assurance.

I saw them smile in my misted viewing.
 Half-conscious I sensed the reality
 Break out in the drift of humanity,
 The murmurings of domestic joy,
 And the *shalomic* awareness
 Of Fatherly unity.

KNOWING THE KINGDOM —THE GREAT KINGDOM— IN TODAY’S WORLD

Sometimes we mistake ‘knowledge about’ for ‘knowledge of’, and this is a pity. There is nothing strong in ‘knowledge about’, but it can never replace ‘knowledge of’. When we have experimental knowledge of a thing, then we truly know it. At the same time, when we lack ‘knowledge about’, our ‘knowledge of’ may also be somewhat deficient. We may excuse our rejection of ‘knowledge about’, saying that such knowledge is not spiritual, and indeed is unspiritual. Such reasoning lacks true thoughtfulness. Knowledge—to speak in today’s language—is both cognitive and affective. It is understood in terms of our thinking, and felt in terms of our feeling. How rich, how deep and high and wide, are all the things God has given us to know and to enjoy! Hence the essay below is presented not as an intellectual marathon to be run, but as a joyous understanding to be relished and experienced. To both know and to be in the Kingdom of God is the highest calling and richest experience the human spirit can know.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE KINGDOM

In Proverbs 19:2 it is written, ‘It is not good for a man to be without knowledge, and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way’. Another translation has it, ‘It is not good to have zeal without knowledge’. The essence of the verse is that if we lack true knowledge then our actions will spring from ignorance, and that means we will miss the way, or the true manner, in which we can and ought to live. Whilst the acquisition of certain knowledge can bring conceit—‘Knowledge puffs up’—yet true knowledge is the very basis of true humanity. We know that man at the Fall ‘exchanged the truth of God for a lie’, and that his new ‘truth’ (i.e. the lie) brought a sad and sorry way of living or existence to him. It is good then to reflect, to acquire knowledge and to be thoughtful. If the truth is there for reflection, then action we undertake will also be proper.

This principle relates to all knowledge, and certainly to what we call the theological or doctrinal knowledge. Whilst intellectualism is always a threat to living practically in the truth, yet the zeal that has no knowledge can cause a person to go astray. We should match zeal with knowledge and knowledge with zeal.

One of the areas in which we can be greatly ignorant is that of the Kingdom of God. Some believers have a vague idea that God rules the world, and that one day He will come down upon it in a mighty gesture of authority and judgement, and set things aright. Whilst there is truth in

this thinking, it is not the kind of knowledge which arouses zeal, for zeal has little to work on. We will, then, try to puzzle out some of the elements of the Kingdom of God as we seek to see the Kingdom in action. We need to know something of the background ideas of the Kingdom, some of its action in history, so that we can see where we are in relation to the Kingdom today. In fact it would be better to say, 'To see where we are in relation to the Kingdom of God'.

Some General Elements Concerning

the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is simply the reign or rule of God. He is King over all the world. Had heavenly powers continued, totally, to obey Him, then His Kingdom would have been perfect. Had created man not rebelled against his Creator, then the Kingdom of God would have been complete.

Since some celestial (heavenly) and terrestrial (earthly) creatures have chosen to disobey God, then there is rebellion in the Kingdom of God, but in some curious way this rebellion will ultimately turn out to the glory of God. One day He will have cleansed His Kingdom of all these rebellious and dissident elements. Until then, there is a sense in which it will be a divided Kingdom.

Even more, these rebellious creatures—heavenly and earthly—have, virtually, a kingdom of their own. The Bible calls it 'the world system'. It is headed up by its false king-father, i.e. the devil. It seeks to displace God and His Kingdom, but cannot do so since God is eternal, and is

Creator. All creatures are created and do not have God's powers. Even so, this false kingdom can be a great problem within the wider kingdom of creation.

God made Israel to be a kingdom, and such a kingdom is linked with the idea of covenant. Covenant is God's way of working in grace towards those who have faith in Him. All such will one day inherit the Kingdom of God, a fact which is amazing, and an experience of God's rule which is extraordinary and quite beautiful.

Israel by no means succeeded as a kingdom. Even so, it had been prophesied that from it would come one called the Messiah ('anointed one', i.e. anointed to be king). Thus John the Baptist—one of the greatest of all prophets—came from the desert and announced that the Kingdom of God was 'at hand', i.e. on the very doorstep. He came as a forerunner to the Messiah, who in fact was Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus himself announced the Kingdom, and whilst he avoided explicitly calling himself Messiah, he nevertheless indicated to others that this was the case.

He had a Gospel which was called 'the gospel [good news] of the Kingdom of God'. The term 'Kingdom of God' means it does not originate from man but from God. The term 'Kingdom of heaven' means it does not originate from the earth, but from heaven. Certain Scriptures lead us to believe that Jesus was anointed at his baptism, which really meant he was crowned as King, as Messiah.

From the time of his coronation Jesus proceeded to 'enact the Kingdom', i.e. to move about as the King who had the authority of God, and so to oppose all elements of the false kingdom of the devil, and to command them to release those whom they had held in certain sickness, under certain demonic powers, and in guilt. In this sense

the Kingdom of God was operative in the person of Jesus Christ.

Much more was needed, and indeed it was for this ‘much more’ that Jesus had come. He went to the Cross and suffered the entire guilt of the sin of mankind, destroying its defilement and pollution, thus breaking the power of evil and the evil kingdom. This work was sealed by his resurrection. Now the ‘gospel of the kingdom’ was transformed into ‘the gospel of salvation’. It needed only the Holy Spirit to come to give Jesus’ followers both ‘zeal and knowledge’, and they could go out with the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles—as we will see later in this essay.

Ultimately the Kingdom will come in all fullness. At the present time the church is working in the service of the Kingdom of God, for Christ is using it to bring defeat to evil powers. The power to do this arises from the Atonement, i.e. the work of the Cross and the Resurrection. Christ will come again, and his forces will finally defeat all that is wrong and evil, both judging and punishing it destroying its power for ever. Then the new, true, and glorious situation will open up to all the creation, and will obtain for ever, namely the triumph and fulfilment of the Kingdom of God.

Knowing and Living in God’s Kingdom Today

What concerns us is whether we are in the Kingdom of God or not, and whether we work in it and for it. Sometimes a theological idea seems to be divorced from the

practice of life. What, then, is the Kingdom of God for us today? What do the Scriptures tell us about it? How can we evaluate it, and be part of its action?

These are the questions we will try to answer, as well as look at some aspects of the Kingdom.

ASPECT ONE: THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

IT IS A LOVE KINGDOM

That it is a Kingdom of love is evident from the fact that Paul tells us, ‘He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins’. We say ‘it is evident’ because the Kingdom in which we now live is ‘the kingdom of the Son of his love’. That is, the Father is love, for it is well known that ‘God is love’. The Son He has eternally begotten is the very issue of His love. The Son, then, is the Son of love. He loves as the Father loves. The Father loves the Son, and the Son the Father, and this is the very essence of their Kingdom.

That it is the Kingdom of love is also evident from the fact that the Father has delivered us from ‘the dominion of darkness’. Dominion means ‘lordship’ and the kingdom of darkness—which is the opposite to the Kingdom of light—is a kingdom in which we lived before we were delivered. All we had there was hardness and harshness, division and enmity amongst ourselves, and slavery from our masters—the evil powers. They, being celestial powers who had gone

wrong, who had rebelled against God, took delight in enslaving us, and bringing us to such degradation that the image of God would not shine beautifully to them, for they loathe the image of God. They loathe it because they were not made so high in God's order as to be in His image, and they loathe it because one day they shall be judged by glorified human creatures. They loathe it most of all because it reminds them of the God of glory Himself.

The Father took us out of that kingdom—the kingdom of darkness. He delivered us. The word 'delivered' is a powerful word. It means He saved us from the destroying power of evil and put us into a place of 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. To be *taken out of* is one thing; to be *placed into* a new and beautiful situation— that is most wonderful.

For the moment we will say this Kingdom cannot be seen with human eyes, but that does not mean it cannot be known and felt in the human spirit: it can. When we live in the love of the Father and the Son, when we know relief from the slavery and captivity of darkness, then we know it is the most powerful of kingdoms, most real in its actions, and so full of love. That is why we call it 'the Kingdom of love'.

THE KINGDOM COMING TO THIS WORLD

John the Baptist announced, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'. He called it the Kingdom of heaven because it was not the kingdom of earth. It was called the Kingdom of God because it was not the kingdom of man, or of any other creature. It was now 'at hand' because previously it

had not been 'at hand', i.e. quite near. It had been afar off, unseen, its King absent to human senses and comprehension. Now it was at hand. This was a great moment in history.

John the Baptist knew—as did all Israelites—that all the heavens and the earth belonged to God, the creatures and nations therein, and in that sense all creatures ever were, and will be, in the Kingdom. John knew, however, that the rebellion of men and angels had brought division and controversy into the Kingdom of God, and whilst none could dethrone the King, yet rebellious and angry elements would be there until the day of judgement when God would clear His Kingdom of such things.

Israelites also knew that one day God would establish His Kingdom on earth as it was in heaven—without rebellion, every knee bowing to Him and all nations being subject to Him. The Jews had the fond idea that this Kingdom would have its head and summit in Israel, and encompass the earth to its uttermost parts, for the Messiah —Son of God, as in Psalm 2—was to inherit all the peoples of the earth, even to the ends of the earth, and they were to kiss this Son, and be subject to him.

COMING INTO THE COMING KINGDOM

John's announcement then electrified his hearers. Those who were people of faith rushed to the Jordan to be baptised by John, for repenting of their sins—and even confessing them—they were clean and pure for the coming of the King of the Kingdom—Messiah himself! John not only called joyously for such repentance—baptism, as

he announced the coming Kingdom, but also the coming forgiveness of sins, and the universal outpouring of the Spirit by Messiah.

When Jesus was baptised and anointed by God with the Spirit so that he was Messiah the King, his Kingdom was not seen by the senses of man. It was signified by the signs which Jesus did. So John tells us in his Gospel that ‘many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he did; but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men... he himself knew what was in man’. Such who saw his signs saw them as miracles but did not read them as signs and so allow themselves to be conducted to the Kingdom.

When one of the leading Jews came to Jesus he was willing to believe—because of the signs—that Jesus was a man come from God. In essence Jesus told him he could not see the Kingdom until he was born from above—by God. This seemed strange to the man, and he said so. Jesus told him that that which was born of human flesh was simply human. A new birth was required before one could see the Kingdom, and that new birth had to come by the Spirit of God. One needed to be born of water’, i.e. to have repented—for such was the baptism of repentance—and one needed to be born of the Spirit. Man was created by the Spirit of God, and now he needed a new creation. This birth by the Spirit was something a man could not organise, since ‘the Spirit [the Divine Breath and Wind] blows where he wills’.

The Jewish leader—Nicodemus by name—was told that this doctrine and experience of new birth was there in the Scriptures, and mostly in the healing from death by the bronze serpent on a pole. Israel had been bitten by the

serpents in the wilderness, and this bronze serpent represented God’s power over death. This—in the case of Messiah—was to be his death so that others might have life. Such a sight, and such a believing, would bring man out of death into life, into the very Kingdom of God.

Man, then, needs repentance and faith, and God will bring about his new birth. God will give entrance into His very Kingdom!

OPENING THE KINGDOM TO OTHERS

The ancient Christian hymn called the ‘Te Deum’ says,

*When he had overcome the sharpness of death,
He opened the Kingdom of heaven to all believers*

The first Scripture reference in this section told us that the Kingdom of God (of heaven) is the Kingdom of the Son of His love. Somehow—between his baptism and his resurrection—Jesus had secured the Kingdom. By this we mean that he had defeated all the elements which oppose the rule of God, had defeated them, and ensured that the Kingdom could not be violated. The Kingdom came in his person—for Where the King was, there the Kingdom was—but on the cross, and in his death and resurrection, he sealed the victory of the Kingdom for ever.

Before his death, and in fact early in his ministry in Palestine, he had given to his disciples the power of opening the Kingdom to others. He said, ‘To you [plural] I give the keys of the Kingdom. Whatever you open on earth shall have been opened in heaven, and whatever you bind [close] on earth shall have been bound in heaven’.

When he rose from the dead he spent some forty days talking to his disciples about the Kingdom. He then promised them they would be baptised in the Holy Spirit, i.e. the Spirit would be poured out upon them so that they might witness to him. In their Hebrew Scriptures the coming of the Kingdom and the outpouring of the Spirit were always linked—as, indeed, John had linked them. The disciples thought, then, that God was about to restore the Kingdom to Israel. Well, He was about to ‘restore the Kingdom’, but not just to Israel but also to Samaria and all the nations—‘to the ends of the earth’. The Holy Spirit was to come upon the apostles so that they could ‘open the Kingdom of heaven to all believers’. Another way of saying this was that they were to be witnesses to Messiah.

How then did this happen? It happened at Jerusalem for all Israel on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out upon them and the Kingdom of heaven was opened for all who repented and believed, i.e. those destined to be born from above—by the work of Christ and the power of the Spirit. Yet it happened at Jerusalem not without the *presence of the apostles*. It happened at Samaria where Philip the evangelist had gone to preach the Gospel to Samaritans, *but not until the apostles—Peter and John— had come down* was the Spirit outpoured and so the Kingdom opened to the Samaritans, to whom it had previously been closed. It happened at Caesarea for the Gentiles (the nations of the world), where *Peter the apostle* had been called by the Spirit to preach the Gospel of forgiveness. On preaching that word the Gentiles received forgiveness just as had the Jews at Pentecost, and so the Kingdom of God was also opened to them.

We must note that the presence of the apostles in the opening of the Kingdom to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (the nations) was not just incidental or coincidental. It was the apostolic use of the keys, and once used they are not now—not anyway in that primary sense—used by the church.

THE PRESENT LIFE OF THE KINGDOM

We must not speak of the Kingdom of heaven in general terms. The Kingdom is here, now! It is the Kingdom of the Son of His love. It is the Kingdom into which sinners are now transferred, and they are transferred by the work of Christ in his Atonement—his death, resurrection and ascension. Such are already in the Kingdom of God, safeguarded from the powers of evil, whose kingdom is a kingdom of slavery, imprisonment, bitterness and hatred. By contrast the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of love. In it are ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’.

THE KINGDOM IS THE KINGDOM OF HIS SON

We have seen that this Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Son of His love, i.e. His beloved Son. In Psalm 2 God declared Messiah—the anointed one—to be His Son: ‘This day have I begotten thee’. Such words were used at Jesus’ baptism—his coronation—and at his transfiguration—another part of his coronation. In the New Testament the Kingdom is also called ‘the kingdom of Christ and of God’, ‘the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ’,

and ‘the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ’. At the end, when all things shall have been subjected under Christ’s feet, Christ will give the Kingdom to the Father, in which case it will be the Kingdom of the Father and His Son.

THE KINGDOM IS THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

We have seen that as the Father is love, so is the Son, and because they rule over this Kingdom it is the Kingdom of love, and cannot be otherwise. If it is ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ then it is also love in him, ‘because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’. Paul not only talks about ‘the love of the Spirit’, but tells the Colossian church that he had heard of their ‘love in the Spirit’. The fruit of the Spirit is ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control’.

We know we are in the Kingdom when we live in the love of the Father, Son and Spirit whose Kingdom it is, and when we respond to the love of God, and love the brethren. It is no small thing to live in ‘the harvest of the Spirit’. It is a wonderful, an extraordinary world!

THE KINGDOM IS THE KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS

One might think he is in the Kingdom when he is not. When we are forgiven, cleansed of our sinful impurity, justified and made the children of God by regeneration and adoption, then we will have a horror of evil and a

hatred of sin and its pollution. What we need to do is examine ourselves and see whether in fact—in spite of our many failures and sins—we have a hatred of sin and are repelled by evil. Some four times Paul warns against thinking we will inherit the Kingdom of God if we live in the works of the flesh, if we are idolaters, adulterers, alcoholics, sexual perverts, gluttons, and thieves and robbers. If we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption. The flesh is not subject to the law of God, for it cannot be.

The richness of the Kingdom is that it keeps us from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Its wonderful nature is such as to keep us loving God and hating evil. They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh. They are dead to sin and the world. They live in the eternal life of God.

THE FUTURE OF THE KINGDOM

Why should we who have been brought into the Kingdom of God desire to inherit it utterly? What is there about it which is so rich? The answer is that once we have seen it by new birth, once we have entered it by the work of the Spirit, once we know it to be the Kingdom of the Father and the Son, and live in the amazing harvest of the Spirit—the things of love, joy and peace—then it is that we want it and only it. We desire it with all our heart and mind and soul and strength.

Even so, it is the future of the Kingdom that rules our minds as it fills us with great hope. The final two chapters

of the Book of the Revelation give us wonderful pictures of its beauty. In this Kingdom—the eternal age to come— there will be no pain or shame, no weeping or sorrow, no sickness or death. All evil will have been overcome, the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb will be a time of great rejoicing, and the Holy City—the True Kingdom-City—will have its gates open day and night, and the nations will stream into it, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of the river of life, and look on the face of the Lord God Almighty, and be a kingdom of priests, kings and priests unto our God, and reign for ever.

OUR PRESENT PRESENCE IN THE KINGDOM

Now we must see whether or not we are in the Kingdom of God. It is not difficult to know. We ask ourselves the questions, ‘Have I been born again?’ i.e. ‘Have I repented of my evil, believed personally in Christ, and received the gifts of forgiveness, love and the Holy Spirit?’ ‘Do I love in the love of the Father and the Son?’ ‘Do I have the fruit of the Spirit?’ ‘Do I live in “righteousness, peace and joy”?’

If not, then—whatever my religious actions may be—I live in the alternative kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. I have not been born again of water and the Spirit. I have not repented and believed and received salvation and the gift of the Spirit along with God’s love. I am lost for ever. I can anticipate no such great Kingdom, but only crying and weeping, pain and sorrow, guilt and judgement, the loneliness of separation from God, the dark gulf between Him and me, and my lostness—for ever!

ASPECT TWO: THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER

WE ARE BORN INTO THE KINGDOM

Jesus once said, ‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven’. The idea of becoming innocent, simple, submitted and trusting is distasteful to us. We are too proud, as sinners, to undergo death to ourselves and come alive to God—in His Kingdom! We have learned to be ‘great’ where we are, or if we have not we yet strive to be. To lose all of this in order to become simple and unseen seems foolish—like the grain of wheat losing its identity by falling into the ground and dying, unseen and lying in darkness. Yet what a miracle—the birth of a plant, the growth and glorious fruitage of it!

So too, we are born into the Kingdom of God, for the new birth changes us from being lost and worthless sinners who are concerned only for ourselves. We become new creatures. When the Spirit comes and shows us the Cross—Christ lifted up as the serpent for our sins which have brought us to death—then that work of the Spirit changes our hearts.

Thus we were not only desirous of becoming little children, but we would have been afraid not to be delivered from the powers of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of His beloved Son. So we became as little children, we were born again. We had been in darkness,

but the Father came, and His Son and His Holy Spirit, and now we are in the Kingdom.

IT IS THE KINGDOM OF THE HOLY LOVING FATHER

If we have been transferred to the Kingdom of the Son of His love, then we have been transferred to the Kingdom of the Father. At the end of the age the -Lord Christ —the King— will say, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’. This is because—as Paul said—‘Before the foundation of the world. He predestined us in love to be his sons, through Jesus Christ’.

It is a wonderful thing to be loved by the Father, to know His redeeming love, His warm welcoming embrace to us who are His prodigal sons. None of us deserves so glorious a Kingdom, but it is His grace which draws us and enters us into the Kingdom.

There is enough in the Sermon on the Mount to occupy us in thought and devotion for the remainder of our lives, and much of it is about the Father and the Kingdom. It is about praying in the Kingdom—to the Father—in secret. It is about giving our alms and gifts secretly in the Father’s knowledge. It is about not being anxious or getting under stress, for the Father understands all and cares for His children. Those who understand these things are the true ‘sons of the kingdom’, the ones who truly live in the Father.

This makes it worthwhile to become as little children, living in trustful relationship with the Father. This is the glory that comes from being born again—into the Kingdom!

THE FATHER’S LOVE IS SHOWN IN THE CROSS

We may think the Son in his love came of his own will to redeem us, and this of course is true, but it was the Father Who sent him:

‘For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life... this charge I have received from my Father.’

I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.’

It was the Father who sent Him, and Jesus told us this forty times in John’s Gospel. Other biblical writers tell us that God set Him forth to be a propitiation for our sins, that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, that He made him to be sin for us, that it was His will to bruise him—for us, and most amazingly, ‘He abandoned him up [to death, sin, guilt, judgement, the law, Satan and the powers of darkness] for us all’. The Father gave up that which was dearest to Him. What unspeakable love! What infinite compassion! What powerful and effective pity! How great, then, must have been our sins and evil, our apathy and indifference to Him!

THE FATHER’S GREAT INTENTION FOR US

His intention was that we should be ‘conformed to the image of his Son’, that His Son ‘might be the first-born among many [such] brethren’. How could sinful and lost man be finally formed and shaped up to be as the eternal Son himself?. How could man come into so much glory of character and being? So He promised, the who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son’. This is ‘the hope of sharing the glory of God’.

What a magnificent intention for us, predestining us—in love—to be His sons!

**DO WE REALLY KNOW THAT WE ARE
THE SONS OF THE FATHER?**

On one occasion when Jesus was talking with some leaders of the Jews (the apostle John records), they took him to task for saying he would make them free if they received the truth he was telling. They objected that they had never been in bondage to anyone. They claimed they were sons of Abraham, and when Jesus questioned this they went on to say they were sons of God for God was their Father.

Jesus told them that they were sons of the devil, and not of God. He told them they had ‘eaten deceit’, i.e. the devil had deceived them into thinking they were really sons of God. They could not believe so outrageous a statement, and perhaps we could be children of the devil and not think this was the case. Matthew in his Gospel tells two frightening things, the first being that many who thought they were sons of the Kingdom, i.e. sons of God, would be cast out of the Kingdom. The other was that to many who would say they had done great miracles, exorcisms and prophecy in Jesus’ name, Jesus would answer, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

Is it possible we are unsaved sinners when we think we are God’s true people—His saints? Frightening possibility!

**LET US TEST OUT WHETHER OR NOT
WE ARE IN THE KINGDOM**

The first test of whether or not we are His children is not that we think we are saved but that we are holy. If we

pray, ‘Holy be Thy name!’ to the Holy Father, and then live in filth, we are making a mockery of God, to say nothing of ourselves. ‘You shall be holy; for I am holy’, was the command, first to Israel, and then to the church. ‘If you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear...’ The ‘high and lofty One who inhabits eternity’ must be regarded with awe, and His children must separate themselves from all things that are impure. By this they will know they are children of the Father.

Anyone who does not do righteousness and does not love his brother is of the evil one. That is clear enough. If we have been forgiven, then we must forgive: ‘if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive’. If we have been loved by Him then we must love all persons. Cain and Abel were blood-brothers, but Cain was not in the true family of God. We must test ourselves to see whether, in reality, we be in this family and this Kingdom.

Having noted the test of holiness and righteousness, let us see whether we pass the test of forgiveness. Do we really know the forgiveness of God for *all* our sins? ‘He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, *the forgiveness of sins.*’ If this amazing experience has been ours and continues to be ours, and since it is linked with being in the Kingdom, the question arises, ‘Do we then forgive others?’ We are called upon to have instantaneous forgiveness: ‘Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each

other; *as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive*'.

It is significant in the great discourse on the Kingdom of heaven—the Sermon on the Mount—that Jesus said the members of the Kingdom were those who forgave because their sins had been forgiven. To expect the fullness of forgiveness where there was refusal to forgive was to fly in the face of the Father's forgiveness.

What follows on in regard to forgiveness is that we know God's love in forgiveness and by forgiveness—'He loves little who has been forgiven little. He loves much who has been forgiven much'—so that love and forgiveness are one together. To forgive without love is not to forgive. To say we love but not then forgive others, is to make a mockery of both love and forgiveness.

Paul in one of his Letters has a passage (Eph. 5:1-17) which speaks first of walking in light (i.e. holiness), and then of walking in love. Likewise John in his First Letter speaks of walking in light, and living together in love. We may sum up, then, that those who are in the Kingdom live holy lives of love—and that all of this is by the enabling grace of God.

We ought to see that being children of God, i.e. 'the sons of the kingdom', is not merely a category. It is our life's occupation. As the Son is King and rules powerfully in history, and as the Father—always behind His Son and supporting him—is also in action, so must the children of be 'doers of the word'. From Matthew 5:9 we see that the sons of God are peacemakers—they seek to bring about reconciliation. Later Paul exhorts his hearers to be reconciled to God. God, through His Son, reconciles all things through the blood of the Cross. In Hebrews 12:14 the writer urges, 'Strive for peace [i.e. reconciliation] with all

men'. The desire to reconcile is, then, a sign that we are in the Kingdom, .for 'the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'.

One further powerful test of being His children—and so of being assured we are in the Kingdom—is whether we can and do cry from the heart, 'Oh, Father!' The Spirit within cries 'Abba! Father!' and so we cannot but cry the same. It is then we know we are the children of God—in His Kingdom. In this case and state we are no longer slaves, but heirs, heirs of God and His Kingdom.

ASSURANCE THAT WE ARE IN THE KINGDOM

If we refer back to our first aspect, 'The Kingdom of Love', then we see we must be:

- (a) born again by the Holy Spirit through the work of the Cross (John 3:3-14; cf. John 1:12-13), which means,
- (b) we have repented and had faith.

The following other points are tests to our being in the Kingdom:

- (c) Do we have only 'talk' and not 'power'? (I Cor. 4:20).
- (d) Do we live in 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'? (Rom. 14:17).
- (e) Do we live in love and forgiveness? (Col. 1:13-14; 3:12-13; Eph. 4:32).

- (f) Do we have the fruit of the Spirit—along with love? (Gal. 5:22-23).
- (g) Are we deceived by evil so much that we do not live in holiness of life? (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:545).
- (h) Are we members of the Kingdom in childlike humility, or are we—in some way or another— building a kingdom for ourselves? What kind of kingdoms can we build?

Our real assurance comes from being able to cry ‘Abba! Father!’ to God, ‘Jesus is Lord!’ to Christ, and to know the Spirit crying ‘Abba! Father!’ within us. We thus walk by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14) and know we are the children of God, in His Kingdom.

ASPECT THREE: PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM

THE CHURCH IS NOT THE KINGDOM

The first thing we must see is that the church is not the Kingdom. Whilst all members of the church belong to the Kingdom, we do not pray, ‘Thy church come!’, because Christ said he would build his church, and he has, but the Kingdom is not built. It is the reign of God that ever was and will be. The church proclaims the Kingdom. It is the agency of the Kingdom, and tells forth the ‘Gospel of the Kingdom’, which is really the ‘Gospel of salvation’. The

church offers entrance into the Kingdom, teaches the life of the Kingdom, shares in the life of the Kingdom, and proclaims the full coming with the return of Christ and the defeat of all the enemies, when God brings about their judgement, and the judgement of rebellious man.

I Corinthians 15:24-28 shows that from the time of his ascension and the sending of the Spirit, Christ works at putting down all the enemies of the Kingdom, and so at the end it will be proclaimed, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever’. It is at that time every knee shall bow to Christ and every tongue will confess, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord!’, to the glory of the Father, the Father to whom Christ shall give the Kingdom, for the Son-King will be subject to the Father-King.

THE MESSAGE THEY PROCLAIMED

Both John and Jesus announced that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand. Jesus called to people to repent and believe the Gospel. The Gospel they were to believe was ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom’, i.e. the ‘good news’ brought by the messenger on the mountain (Isa. 52:7). The evangelist announced, ‘Thy God reigns!’ This was apt for the times of Israel then in Palestine, because they were under the heel of the oppressor—Rome. However, it went further, because it meant the Kingdom of God was to come to Israel in the form of Messiah, and under his leadership.

Wherever Jesus went he was King, having been crowned in his baptism, i.e. anointed by the Spirit to be Messiah in

accordance with such prophecies as Psalm 2, Isaiah 42: 1-2, Isaiah 61:1—and others. In one sense there was—as yet—no Gospel of salvation. It was in the making. Jesus as King could forgive sins, deliver people from Satan where certain sicknesses, guilt and demon oppression had ruled, but there awaited some act of Messiah whereby a Gospel of redemption could come to the world.

**THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM BECAME
ALSO THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION**

Christ's main work was the act of the Atonement, i.e. the death of the Cross in which all guilt was borne by Jesus—by the aid of the Father and the Spirit—and destroyed. The Resurrection was also part of that act for it meant the defeat of death, assuring believers that sin was defeated when death was destroyed. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead showed nothing had power over him. The fact that the Father raised him through the Holy Spirit showed that he was accepted of God.

The Ascension is important because it showed that God attested His Son to be the Saviour of the world, and Lord over all creation. To be received by the Father-King of the Kingdom was to show he was the Son-King, and that he was now to rule over all things—having been raised above all other rule and power, and made to be head over all things, not only in this present troubled age, but in the eternal ages. Nothing, then, could ascend above his mighty Lordship, for he for ever reigns over all things. As in creation this Son created all things and so they subsist in him, have their being in him, so now this man—Jesus—has earned Lordship over all created things

by his battle for that Lordship, on the Cross, and through rising from death—as a man!

In this way the Gospel of our salvation was created, and it remained, then, only for his followers to formulate this reality in what was called 'the apostolic truth'. This was the message they proclaimed and the truth by which they lived. In fact it was to proclaim it that they lived. It was their life, their motivation, as the great love of God and Christ through the Atonement was their ever-powerful constraint to make that proclamation.

**THEY PROCLAIMED THE LORDSHIP, THAT IS, THE
MESSIAHSHIP, OF JESUS**

Because Jesus had risen from the dead—never to die again—then the apostles had a remarkable message to declare. On this basis they said such things as:

‘Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified’;

You denied the Holy and Righteous One...and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead’;

‘The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins’.

The apostles announced in essence, ‘If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved’.

This, then, was the message which on the one hand we call ‘the Gospel of the Kingdom’, and on the other ‘the Gospel of salvation’. Both really mean the one thing. We have seen in our past studies that Jesus as man was the

Messiah who went through Palestine, ‘doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him’. Now his Messiahship has become universal with the opening of the Kingdom to the Jews, to the Samaritans and to the Gentiles.

THE APOSTOLIC ELEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL

Two words are used by the apostles to describe the Gospel, the first being *euangellion*, ie. ‘the good news’, and the other *kerugma*, ie. ‘the proclamation or announcement’. The two are much the same in meaning, for it was good news which was proclaimed. The *kerugma* had a certain form or content, for it began back with God’s dealings with Israel, His prophetic promises of a Messiah, then moved on to the coming of the Messiah in fulfilment of those prophecies. It pointed out that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies, and was rejected by the rulers and people who crucified him, but even this crucifixion was in accordance with the prophecies. God, having raised Jesus from the dead, made him Lord over all, and this Lord now offers salvation—forgiveness of sins, justification by grace, and a place in the Kingdom.

One special passage seems to go beyond even the general form of the *kerugma*. It is Acts 20:18-32, and has ‘the following elements of the Gospel of salvation. In verse 21 it speaks of ‘repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’. In verse 24 it speaks of ‘the gospel of the grace of God’, and in verse 25 it speaks of ‘preaching the kingdom of God’. All of these elements can be found in their expanded form in the writings of the apostolic Letters.

There are other elements such as the call for repentance, the need for baptism, the forgiveness of sins, the offer of justification, and the promise of the gift of the Spirit. Those who heard this message came into the fullness of Christ and under His Lordship. They entered the Kingdom of God by the work of the Spirit in regeneration —‘the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit’.

Such people were so gripped by the good news, and so transformed by it, that they now desired to tell others that message, i.e. to proclaim the Kingdom.

The Way the Early Church Proclaimed the Kingdom

THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER, AS THE COMMUNITY OF THE FORGIVEN, THE COMPANY OF LOVE

In the first seven chapters of Acts we see the events which led up to Pentecost when the Spirit of God was outpoured upon the 120 people who anticipated being baptised in the Spirit. Having heard the apostolic message of the Gospel, thousands were baptised and entered the Kingdom of God. Because all their sins were forgiven they felt free. Doubtless they also forgave all others because they had been forgiven. Love was poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit who had been given to them, and so the new group became the community of love. They were in the Kingdom of the Son of the Father’s love, and they lived in love.

The evidence of this love was the daily distribution of

food, and probably clothing. To meet this crisis of need, many sold what they possessed and shared the proceeds with the poor, the widows, and the orphans. So we read, ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers’, and, ‘all who believed were together and had all things in common. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people’.

Shortly after Pentecost the apostles began to be persecuted, and the church prayed strongly for them, the result of which was that where the people were assembled the place shook and they were all freshly filled with the Holy Spirit, and ‘the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common’.

THEY WERE A HOLY COMMUNITY

We have seen that love and holiness are two marks of the Kingdom. These were seen in the early church. In the fifth chapter of Acts we read of two persons—Ananias and Sapphira—who being husband and wife sold some property, but both conspired to say they had given all the proceeds to the church, when in fact they kept back part of them. This event was likely to cause hypocrisy and bring desire for human praise into the church and so defile it, and the two met their deaths in judgement. As a result ‘great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things’, but far from deterring people

coming into the Kingdom, it acted as a holy impetus, ‘And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women’.

THE PLACE OF SIGNS AND WONDERS

In the first half a dozen chapters of Acts there are numerous mentions of God working through two things, the first being the proclamation of the Gospel, the preaching of the word of God, the telling of the good news. The second was the doing of signs and wonders. At Pentecost the coming of the Spirit was a great wonder, accompanied by signs of burning flames and many tongues, but the most remarkable was the free utterance of praise and worship and the telling out of the wonderful works of God. Peter’s sermon brought thousands flocking to God, and we are told that in the midst, and at the time, of this loving community, ‘fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles’. Peter and John healed a man who had been crippled from his birth, which led to more Gospel-preaching and many responding to it.

A little later—when the people prayed at the time of the persecution of the apostles by the Jewish Sanhedrin (the Jewish parliament of the seventy elders)—they prayed,

‘And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus’.

Again, when the judgement of Ananias and Sapphira had taken place and holy fear came to all, then,

..many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles... so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

In the sixth chapter of Acts, ‘Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people’. Now not only the apostles do signs, although the doing of signs and wonders was part of true apostleship as Paul later announced: ‘The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works’. Throughout the Book of the Acts signs and wonders attest to the word of God, and to the messengers of that word, so that Paul—later speaking of the way in which he preached the Gospel—was able to say that he won ‘obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit’. We need to note the order of ‘word, deed, signs and wonders, power of the Spirit’. When these elements are one then the Gospel is truly preached.

THE EARLY CHURCH WAS A GOING AND SENDING COMMUNITY

In the first part of Acts chapter 1, Jesus had said—virtually—that the Kingdom of God was to come to the people by the preaching of the Gospel, i.e. witness to Christ: ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of

the earth’. It was first to come ‘Jerusalem and all Judea’, then to ‘Samaria’, and then to ‘the end of the earth’.

The Gospel was first to the Jews because they had been people to whom Messiah had been promised and from whom Messiah came. The Samaritans were partly Jewish, partly Gentile, and Jesus had preached to them. They would be next. Finally the ‘end of the earth’ meant all the nations which were neither Jews nor Samaritans. The term ‘end of the earth’ came from Psalm 2 where the nations set themselves ‘against the Lord and his anointed’. ‘His anointed’ means ‘the one anointed to be king’, and so He—God the Father-King—sets His Son-King upon the holy hill of Zion (Jerusalem) and declares the decree, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you’, all of which means that this Messiah is now King in Jerusalem, and is declared to be the Messiah, the Son of God. God then says, ‘Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession’.

This universal thrust to proclaim the Kingdom of God was in accordance with the fact that at the time of the Fall God had prophesied the defeat of all evil by ‘the seed of man’. At a later time it had been prophesied by Jacob (Israel) that all the nations would come in obedience under the Ruler who would arise from the tribe of Judah. Other prophecies had underlined and confirmed this expectation. Now that Messiah had come, his apostles and others were to bring the nations to ‘the obedience of faith’. The apostles saw the Gospel of the Kingdom as God’s command which was to be obeyed. Ultimately all nations would come to kneel before Messiah, in submission to him.

Although the new community formed at Pentecost knew something of this universal aim and goal of God,

they did not immediately go out into all the world. Perhaps it was not yet the time. It was not long before their Gospel polarised the hearers into two groups—those who accepted and those who opposed the message. Stephen was a new believer who was ‘full of grace and power’, and he was killed because of his faith.

This seemed to spark off the active hatred of the opponents of the Kingdom, and many Christians were scattered abroad. An evangelist by the name of Philip went into Samaria and preached the Gospel, thus proclaiming the Kingdom most effectively. Other Jews moved towards Antioch in Syria and told the Gospel not only to Jews who had not heard but also to many of the Greeks. Out of this proclamation grew a most dynamic church, and it in turn sent out Paul and Barnabas, who from that time travelled extensively in Asia Minor and Europe.

Thus we see the early church was a going and a proclaiming community. If, however, we think only of the apostles going to near and distant places, we will have missed something of the spontaneous nature of the Gospel. We will look briefly at the way in which churches witnessed to Christ and proclaimed the Gospel of salvation in their own localities.

‘THE SPONTANEOUS EXPANSION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH’

This heading is put in quotation marks because it is the title of a book written by Roland Allen many years ago. He had been a missionary in China and saw from the Book of Acts and the apostolic Letters that the church was self-expanding. Whilst in a sense we could call the church at Jerusalem the ‘mother church’, yet the church at Antioch

helped the poor Christians in Jerusalem. It was the church which sent out Paul and Barnabas and supported others to preach the Gospel.

When Paul taught at Ephesus a cluster of churches sprang up in Asia Minor. Some of these churches Paul never saw, eg. the churches of Colossae and Laodicea, although they grew out of his ministry. One of the best churches to study is the church which was at Thessalonica in Europe. In the first chapter Paul reminds them that they ‘received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit’. At that time Paul and his team had been persecuted but this did not give the Thessalonians a distaste for the Gospel, but rather they received it as the truth, or, as Paul said, ‘you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God’.

Immediately they began to proclaim that Gospel to others:

•.. so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us what a web come we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.

This remarkable description of the new church at Thessalonica no doubt fitted other churches—if not most—of the day. Paul would teach at a centre or a church, and the movement would fan out from that centre. This was no doubt due to the deep grasp of the Gospel truth, and then the experience of believers who—like the apostles—could not but ‘speak the things which [they had] seen and heard’. The dynamic of conversion

with its ‘washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit’, was its own drive and constraint to proclaim the Gospel to others.

When, then, the church expanded spontaneously, so did the church enlarge the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom. As we have noted, this was often through much persecution and suffering, but the church was the means by which true proclamation was made.

THE CONSTRAINING RELATIONSHIP WITHIN THE KINGDOM

Of course the relationship of the believer—within the Kingdom of God—was (is) to the Father as King, to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and to the Holy Spirit as Empowerer and Guide. This meant that the word of grace, was never separated from the Godhead. Believers were baptised into the *Name* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, they were united with God in a living union so that it could be said that a believer dwelt in the Son (John 15), dwelt in the Father (I John 4:16), that he dwelt and lived and walked in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 18, 25). At the same time the Father, Son, and the Spirit each—yet as One— dwelt in the believer (John 14:15 23; I John 4:16; John 15: 111; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:9-11; II Cor. 1:21; II Tim. 1: 14). Each believer knew that he dwelt in God and God in him, and this was by the work of the Spirit (I John 3:24; 4:13). Since knowing God—i.e. the very relationship with the Father and the Son (John 17:3; I John 5:20)—was eternal life, then the life the church lived was this life of God. This very relationship which was so personal and so powerful, *itself* drove them to share the life of God with others. Such a relationship was carried on in the context

of prayer, worship, the doing of genuine works, and the hearing and proclamation of the word of God. *God spoke to them and God spoke through them. God lived in them. God lived to them, and God lived through them.*

THE GOAL OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

We have learned from Psalm 2, with other Scriptures, that the kingdoms or nations of mankind are ultimately to come under the Lordship and Kingship of the Son, and then the Kingdom is to be given to the Father—that God may be all in all. The Gospel is proclaimed not only to redeem men and women, but so that God’s plan for the nations be fulfilled. This was what the apostles had in mind when they set out to witness to Christ in Jerusalem and all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

This aspect of the Kingdom is so important that we will now deal with it.

ASPECT FOUR: THE GOAL AND COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF THE FATHER

BEHOLD! THY KING COMETH!

On Palm Sunday, as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd was electrified. Those who considered him to be their

Messiah—their coming King—believed he was about to be crowned. They were almost delirious with delight, and others were quickly infected by their sense of assurance and anticipation, so they too cried out until some of the Jewish leaders told Jesus to forbid such cries, but Jesus said that if they were to withhold their homage then the very stones would cry out.

What has moved Christian believers down the ages is the belief that at any moment Christ the King may appear. He will appear—of that there is no doubt—but it could be at *any moment!* This thought has quickened the pulses of Christ's people. It has helped them to endure for his sake. Only through much tribulation will believers themselves enter the Kingdom and inherit its vast possessions, i.e. 'all things'. Thus believers will 'be made worthy of the kingdom of God for which [they] are suffering'. Such is persecution for the Kingdom of heaven's sake, and it occasions great joy to those who are suffering. Who would not endure all things if at any moment his Lord might appear, and appearing usher his devoted subject into the very presence of the Father-King?

LIVING IN THE LAST TIMES

This anticipation of the end-time—the time they called 'the eschaton'—was so rich that rumours spread in the early community which said he had already come. Yet such coming was not to be unless first a great apostasy, i.e. a falling away from the truth, evidenced itself. Strange things were to happen. Prophecies of both Testaments tell us that all that is beastly will personalise itself into beastly forms, involving the power struggles of evil against God

who is good. A son of perdition—counterpart to the Son of salvation—will arise within the church, the very temple of God, giving out the message that he is as God, and so is to be appropriately worshipped. An unholy city—properly called 'Babylon'—will arise as a counterpart to that most glorious City which God is building, namely the Holy City. Just as the Holy City is represented as a woman of glory, so the unholy city will be represented by an unholy woman—the whore of Babylon, the whore who is Babylon.

The last times will be both enriching and demanding times. Beastly evil will demand that all human beings be one with it so that 'the mark of the beast' will be required of the human race. Each person must receive this identification mark, and those who refuse it will be greatly persecuted. They, themselves, will be marked with the mark of God—that of God the Father, and the Lamb, and such identification will infuriate the dragon-like devil who will seek to dominate all things in heaven and earth.

Those who are true believers must endure meekly the terrible times which will have come upon the earth. They are not to take up the sword to win by virtue of such weapons, for the weapons of their warfare are not worldly, but they are of the Spirit. They are strong to the pulling down of many of the strongholds of evil. The mighty power of love and peace and joy, with the accompanying meekness, gentleness and patience, outmode and surpass the macho weapons of the forces of evil.

So then, the true community of God is not political, is not a power-unit, except in the sense that its humility defeats pride, its love defeats hatred, its 'being nothing' defeats the 'being something' of evil. This is the way the

true community lives as it actively proclaims the Kingdom of God.

‘THEN COMES THE END’

Some accounts of the work of evil are constantly interrupted by statements of the invincibility and perpetuity of the Kingdom of God. Time and again visions portray the Father-God and the Lamb as conquering all that is devilish and beastly, and setting up the true throne of God for ever. These accounts depict the final destruction of evil, the unmasking of all pretensions to ruling the creation, so that evil powers are cast down, their overlordship destroyed, and the reality of the true Kingdom set forth in brilliant majesty and beauty.

In that coming of the Kingdom, the church is shown as the pure and beautiful Bride of Christ who by his ‘washing of water with the word’ has assured that she be ‘without spot or wrinkle or any such thing’. She is clothed in shining pure linen, and this garment is composed of ‘the righteous deeds of the saints’. This glowing Bride is also called ‘the Holy City’. She is the new and powerful metropolis of all time and eternity. Her gates are always open to the incoming elect out of every kindred and tribe and tongue and nation.

That most glorious City has as its ruling Head the Father and the Lamb. The people of God have become ‘a kingdom of priests’, and as such they worship the Father and the Lamb ‘day and night within his temple’, for the temple is constituted of God and the Lamb. They too— God and the Lamb—are the light of that City—the

metropolis of purity.

The royal priesthood—the true people of God—shall worship and serve Him for ever. This is the present anticipation of His people, and this is why they endure all things for the Kingdom of heaven’s sake. This is why they can be called ‘the people of hope’.

CONCLUSION TO ‘KNOWING THE KINGDOM IN TODAY’S WORLD’

We have sought to cover something of the vast dimensions of this eternal Kingdom, and whilst unable to do justice to our subject, or to comprehend all its elements, the experiment—if we may call it that—is one of high value.

Firstly we have been able to look at a panoramic view of history, and see the sovereign acts of God as He rules His universe and plans its final climax and denouement. This has enabled us to relax into His plan, and feel secure in His sovereignty.

So then, we have been assured of the failure of all evil. In the final climax or show-down, evil will have accomplished nothing, and no thing it has done will have prevented the will of God being fulfilled.

From the point of view of the practice of life we have seen that God has delivered us from the powers of darkness, and placed us in the Kingdom of the Son of His love. Thus—although as yet the Kingdom of God has not come in all its fullness—we may live the life of the Kingdom, i.e. that life of ‘righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’, which can otherwise be described as living in

the fruit of the Spirit.

Such living may well entail suffering and hardship, but it will still remain a life of love, peace and joy. The spiritual powers of the Kingdom are more than a match for the powers which evil forces wield. Evil has no future, for it is doomed, being under judgement. Those in His Kingdom have a present life of faith, hope and love, by which they can endure unto the end. God's elect are the true people of the past, present, and the future.

Finally we see—and realize—that the Kingdom of God is unseen so far as the natural man, i.e. the Spiritless man, is concerned. Each human being must be born anew by the Spirit so that he may see and enter that Kingdom. Once in that Kingdom he knows it to be the Kingdom of love, the Kingdom of the true Father and Fatherhood, as well as the Kingdom of the Son—the true Lord over all. It is a spiritual Kingdom—the Kingdom of the Spirit. Having been baptised into the very Godhead—the Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the elect of God are content to live life in the Kingdom until it shall come in all its ultimate fullness, and its ultimate power. Meanwhile the true subject of the Kingdom seeks to enlarge his 'knowledge of' and his 'knowledge about' this Kingdom of love, to live in its goodness and proclaim it to others.

O King.' O Coming Kingdom.'

You are the King, and this the Kingdom,
This the realm and domain of all Your Royalty.
This is the dominion You have made for Yourself,
Issuing from Your own divine fiat.
Nothing can be without You, without the word
That first created and then fixed,
Fixed for ever Your royal reign and sovereignty.

We are Your subjects, created by the divine command,
By the creative word. All sprang into light, into being
With the thought articulated, the divine decree,
The eternal wisdom and the unsullied counsel.
World after world emerged, suns, moons and planets
As the word encouraged them into being, gave them
identity,
Fulfilling Your required purposes.

Then in the headiness of being celestial, rebellion
Infected the terrestrial until man
Ennobled himself beyond his own humanity.
Desiring to enlarge his parameters
And encapsulate time, space, and all thought,

Fondly he imaged equal dignity, parity
 With the unparallelable God. His pride
 Brought him into unrealistic madness.

In the headiness of pride he imagined to vanity
 The dimensions of his own being. In the crazed dream
 he saw
 Himself seated with the true Godhead, equalling wisdom
 That is itself without peer, thought unthought,
 Intention not sought after, striven for
 But that which must inevitably be
 Because the King's mandate is irreversible.

In time the celestial princes conspired, drawing with
 them
 The sublime image of the Creator, man himself
 Into their anti-kingdom plot, encouraging
 The terrestrial *hubris*, the overweening pride
 That built a Babel tower and then a Babylon, that
 conspired
 With the unseen powers, with the nations of their
 humanity
 To overthrow the divine kingdom,
 Establishing their own, constructing the counterpart
 Without which pride is but hollow, reality unreal.

In the dark abysses of the labyrinthine mind, the vast
 deceit,
 In the high and crazed intentions the plot grew large
 To supplant the true kingdom with the new.
 With the concocted glory, the split figment
 From the pride-shattered mind, the malfunctional

Endeavours of the indeterminate autonomy.
 Autonomous creatures—self-made autonomy—
 Bent their self-rule in temporary collaborating
 With the dark spirit of evil, the satan-beast,
 The pseudo-prophet, the brilliant Babylon
 Of the seduced and plotting nations.

His Kingdom was, and is, and ever is, is now
 And shall in future be, yet for it such time is not,
 Such time is its temporal setting, such space its seen
 locale In which, and over which, He rules in truth.
 The rebel streams that run are dry trickles
 Of imagined torrents: no rivers there, no falls
 From lofty crags: only the low mumble
 Of imagined nothing. His Kingdom alone is real.

Real in the ancient kingdom of the Jews: real
 In the coming of the prophets, the prophets of the
 coming:
 Then suddenly the Kingdom's come—realm and rule
 of the Father—
 Suddenly has come in the flesh-person of the incarnate
 Word. Life's Spirit anoints Messiah's head: dark spirit
 tempts But is defeated. Man of the word he goes
 Where evil's demons haunt the souls of men, twisting the
 mind,
 Oppressing the body, distorting the human view
 Of the strong and benevolent Creator, the one whose
 heart
 Is that of eternal Redeemer.

On Kingdom's quest he goes, hunting the darkness,
 Dispelling the oppressing, flooding light
 Into the darkness-entrenched beings
 Of the former brilliant Adam. Man and woman that stood,
 Being one, one flesh, one entity, one brilliant light
 Reflecting their great Creator. Demeaned,
 Their glory faded to the grim blackness
 Of the restless mind, the sorrowed soul, the-quenched
 spirit.
 Now, as the Kingdom came, their life revived.

They tell—those chroniclers amazed—how
 The King came striding on, trampling beneath his feet
 The abject demons, the drab diseases, the bland nothingness
 Of the empty minds. Truth blazed in the high beauty
 That awakened the dead and darkened spirits
 To astounding light and life. The Kingdom came
 With every gesture, every footstep
 Of the King himself. Enmity muttered within its own
 darkness,
 Planning the demise of light, its victim a body on a cross,
 Doomed to the limbo of unreturning death.

In the strong hour of evil—the authority of death—
 The imagined power of the dread rebels, Messiah fought.
 His lonely battle fought with guilt and sin, with cruel
 sorrow
 The anguished hurt, and the dread of tomb, this doom
 Was spelled and written on his soul, etched on his
 heart,

Burned in his spirit. Had been not love and holy love
 The battle then were lost, the Kingdom doomed
 High *treason—lese-majeste—had* won the day.

High love and holy, sorrow in the depths,
 Guilt borne and hate received, impurity impure
 Polluting the unpolluted one, until he then
 Unpolluted all, scoured the vileness clean
 And turned to defeat the unholy minds and wills
 Of men oppressed. He seized the strong hour
 And sealed the Kingdom, secured the Reign,
 Defeated the nether gloom of doom
 And set the crushed captives free
 To cross from bondage to the realm of light
 New-born into the eternal reign and realm.

Once liberated the spirit ranges free;
 Its witness irrepressible proclaims for all, to all,
 The message of the Kingdom, the message of the King
 And life's triumphant Prince who conquered death.
 This witness springs from love, from gratitude to grace
 And wonder for the reborn life, the new and splendid
 thing
 That rose from death's doom, dust's dustiness
 Into the life of power, the daily life
 Within the eternal Kingdom.

One day the ultimate shall be, the brilliant ultimate
 Not the penultimate which now we know and live
 Within the contemporary Kingdom. We then shall see
 The plan of glory in the mind of God
 Counselling before all time and brought to be

By the firm and evoking will of God. We shall see
 What the Kingdom is to enlightened eyes
 And hearts ecstatic in the glory-light
 Which compasses the spirit, earth and sky
 And brings the King Himself to dwell
 Within His Holy City, holy place
 Within and for the hearts of men.
 And so, O Lord! Thy Kingdom come!

THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD STORY

I THINK it is always good to tell a story, for all our life is a story of sorts. That is why we like a story, and some stories must be told. They must be told even though there may appear to be something sombre in what we tell. Even a joy-seeking and pleasure-loving people, such as are around us today, will become satiated with their pleasure, and bored with their joy. They will derive greater joy when the contrasts are strong, such as pain and non-pain, tragedy and serenity. It may be that man thinks deepest of all when suffering and tragedy are about. Maybe he is made for greatness and feels guilty with extended pleasure, blandness and mediocrity.

The story I am about to tell certainly has its sufferings and its joys, but who should tell the story I am not quite sure. I mean, from what vantage point do I tell it? From that of my wife, or the three children we had at that time, or from my own point of view? My wife, being a trained nursing sister, would have one feeling for the house and the old man, and the children, being small and quite free in life, might see things in a way I would not understand. I

must do my best to include what I knew, and what I now remember of those days, when I too am growing old.

It was a few years after the Second World War, and I was about to change my vocation. Formerly a farmers-writer, I was to become a theological student, and eventually—an ordained minister. I was to live at home, study at College, and work in a local parish. All we lacked was a house. To find a house was virtually impossible. We were prepared to rent a place, but then where would you find the impossible? Maybe by a mountain of faith. The rector of the church where I was to work asked around, visited estate agents, but with no result.

One day some news came that an old man who had lived in the district had had a nervous breakdown and a serious tragedy, and was now in a mental hospital. If we were prepared to look after him, then we could live in his house. My wife thought that it was possible she could nurse him, and so we went to look at the house.

The house was set back in tall gums. It was an old home with attic rooms. You could see it all from the road, and I was fascinated. In a way my wife was also attracted. Her eyes lit up at the sight of what we might call an English cottage. I trembled a bit to think we could live in so spacious and handsome a house. The man from the Lunacy Department carried the heavy and ancient key by which he opened the front door. There was rust in the lock and the door creaked eerily as it was opened.

I caught the pity in the Lunacy officer's eyes; and well it might have been. Inside the place was a chaos. The characteristic damp smell of locked and uninhabited houses was

strongly present. The whole place was dark because the war-time black-out paper was still nailed to the window frames. There was only Stygian darkness. The man found the main switch and turned it on, but the electric bulbs were of low wattage and barely pierced the sombre darkness. The old light mantles were moth-eaten and sad. We tore back some of the black-out covering and the daylight streamed in.

How sad and desolate was the old house! Damp wallpapers hung out from their walls, great strips that had folded slackly across the floors. My wife Constance looked at me. We both felt sorry for the house. We felt a bit sorry for each other. We had lived romantically in the country in those first years of our lives. Now, with three children who had come in quick succession, the prospect of this damp, smelly house was not a bright one.

The Lunacy man lost some of his official's stance, tugged at a strip of wallpaper, and pulled it down. He examined the wall and tried to hearten us. 'I guess you could clean that paper off, wash the wall, and then give it some Kalsomine. Might make the place into something.'

There were old clothes in piles here and there, eaten away by moths and silverfish. Out in the kitchen, old pots and pans were on the rusted electric stove, the old sanded kitchen table, and some on the floor. In other rooms it became apparent that the roof leaked in many places. Up in the attics everything was bare. What puzzled us was the almost entire lack of furniture.

A smidgen of life was restored when we went out to the back. A wild mass of Morning Glory gleamed with its brilliant blue. It had scrambled over everything, including old abandoned furniture, the skeletons of which had been

partly covered by the vines. Beyond the Morning Glory we saw tumbled blackberry vines gone wild, but just outside the back porch and in modest order were faint signs of an old vegetable garden.

Constance said to me, 'You could soon make something of that.' Somewhere the faint light of a candle flickered in us. We sensed there was some kind of a miracle of restoration about to happen. We both looked at the man from the Department

'We'll go and see the old man,' we told him.

The old man! Both of us had a bit of fear about mental hospitals, or—as they called them in those days—lunatic asylums. The buildings seemed calm and gracious enough. So was the attendant who ushered us outside and across the lawn to where the old man was sitting on an ornamental garden seat.

'Hullo, Mr Hippie,' we said gently. He didn't even hear us. He was living in a world of his own making, and it had little to do with the world we were inhabiting.

The attendant said, 'Mr Hippie, these people want to talk to you.'

After a time he peered at us, but seemed quite tired. He had a pair of loose dentures, and made quite a thing of rattling them about in his mouth. Partly bald, the hair that remained was thin, like that seen on people with malnutrition. He continually rubbed his hands, folding them over one another.

'Eh?' he said. 'Eh?' He peered in our direction. He just didn't know us, and anyway, what could he remember? Maybe in some past time he had known us, or why else would we be visiting him? Very few people came to see him at the hospital. He shook his head fearfully and

sought to return to his own other world.

The attendant stopped him, holding him back. 'These people want to take you home,' he said, 'if you'd like to go.'

It took a long conversation to communicate the matter. He was astounded. He kept saying, 'Home! Home! Home!' in an uncomprehending voice.

'He's a dear old man,' the attendant said. 'Never does a harmful thing nor says anything to anyone.'

My wife's tenderness got the better of her, motivated by the attendant's good reference. She put her arm about his shoulders. 'We want to take you home,' she said. 'We'll come and get you and take you back to your own house.' I was patting his hands awkwardly, trying to keep down my emotion.

After a long conversation in which he stuttered, stammered, wept, wiped his eyes, and rubbed his hands nervously, he said with a firm voice, 'I'd like that! I'd like to go home,' but the whole matter was too difficult for him, and he resorted to tears and trembling. He returned as quickly as possible to the only world he knew—the world of unreality.

The Lunacy officer was most understanding and helpful. He seemed to take a special delight in pushing the matter through. 'Send us the bills for the refurbishing,' he said; 'and there'll be no rent.' We sensed the latter was an astonishing decision he had made all on his own, and we admired him for it. At the same time we could scarcely believe it. A free house was a miracle in those days of low wages, austerity, and officialdom which was for the most part bound in self-protective red tape. We sensed with

excitement that our vocation was going to prove even more exciting than the years we had spent in writing and farming.

Two days later they came—the young people from the church. They were full of fun and wry humour. They teased each other, wasted time, drank tea and soft drinks, consumed quantities of biscuits and cakes as though they had never been fed, and then settled down to work. Off came the great strips of damp paper, walls were scrubbed with brushes, the black-out paper was burned meticulously with the aid of piles of old branches from the gums and some of the skeleton-like furniture. The old clothes burned with difficulty until there was no rubbish left. They lit the ancient copper in the laundry and brought bucket after bucket of hot water and disinfectant. The floors were cleaned, time and again, and the older boys began clearing layers of leaves and rotting humus from the path that led from the front door to the gate. They propped up leaning sections of the front fence, and nailed back palings that had fallen from the side fences.

When they found their way into the old garden shed they went silent with sadness at the sight of useless junk which had been stored. It was utterly worthless, but I sensed sadly that the old folk who had stored it had found some grim delight in it—some feeling of security as they had stored bottles, old tins, kerosene cans, boxes of rusted nails and nuts and bolts and now useless, broken tools. The whole was some kind of a miser's store. The young people cheerfully dumped barrow-loads of it into the gully, down past the brilliant Morning Glory, all the time joking, teasing and chaffing each other.

After this they made more tea on the rusty stove, drank

the tea, ate biscuits and cakes on the sanded kitchen table, teased our three children unmercifully, and with some hearty cheers made their way out through the front gate. For a time we could hear their voices and laughter. We had witnessed a great marvel of youthful love, and glowed and basked in it until they were fully gone.

We had been left by them to smell the sandsoap, feel the fresher air sweeping through the opened house, and wonder how we could paint all the rooms. My mind was on one of the attics above. There I could study, and perhaps write a story or two every so often.

The children had been cheered and fascinated by it all. Young Charlie and Elaine rushed madly about the place, racing up and down stairs for the first time in their lives. Their voices echoed in the empty place. Younger Veronica was scarcely a toddler. Her brother and sister both laid claim to the other attic room.

Sparing you the account of the painting, and the renewal of the house until it was clean, fresh and snug, let me tell you the story of the old man's homecoming. We had excitedly put our furniture in place, laid some rugs and carpets over the blackly painted bare boards, freshened the place with flowers from the now not-so-wild garden, and did all we could so that he would feel at home from the beginning.

Of course it was all too much for him. At first he was exhilarated, his hands going up and down in gestures that seemed almost theatrical. His astonishment, when he saw the outside of the house with the window frames painted, and inside with the darkness banished, fresh curtains, clean floors and polished furniture, was beyond expression for him. I wondered at the time whether his

memory had returned, and he was making comparisons. I could not really tell. In any case he was delighted, and went around the house, back bent, head down, his dentures rattling in astonishment and unbelief, moisture seeping gently out of his eyes, and sometimes the head shaking from side to side with the wonderment of it.

We felt good, as though in the midst of a fairy story in which we might have been fairies ourselves. He could eat little of the food that night, so excited was he, and we had to make sure he took his medication.

Next day he was in the midst of gloom. Only he knew the full story of his life, and perhaps the flood of memories was too much for him. He was not senile but had a sensitivity to life difficult to describe. Small actions and events would touch him deeply. When we heard the full story from an old but sympathetic sister, then we began to understand.

Before what we now call 'the Great Depression', he had been an efficient bank manager, reasonably wealthy, the owner of a motor car, secure with good investments and a gracious social background that fitted the garden suburb in which he lived. He, his wife, and her sister lived in what had been their beautiful home, amply furnished, surrounded by lovely lawns and gardens. Nothing was lacking. All befitted wealth and social status. Francis Hippie was looked up to as a competent financier of more than suburban status.

When the Depression came, it arrived with shocking suddenness. This astute financier was alarmed by a sudden crumbling of the financial system. The long accepted

stability of conservative economics was swept away in a flash. Overnight the share-market crashed. Although I was too young to understand the matter fully, I remember the daily newspaper reports of rich men who had to take to the roads as tramps. Many suicided rather than face the disgrace. In the suburb in which we lived, respectable men hanged themselves rather than live in humiliation. Their only resort was 'the Dole' or 'the Relief, and their pride could not accept Bewildered wives and children were left to fend for themselves.

It was this unbelievable situation that confronted the formerly successful and now late-middle-aged bank manager. His mind became partly unhinged and he withdrew into the house which—remarkably enough—still remained his own. His wife and her sister began to economise. So sparing were they with the food that they began to weaken. Mrs Hippie planned every kind of economy. They stored tins, bottles, lids and the like. They stored newspapers and old magazines, and the pitiful things we had seen in the garden shed.

They became cunning in their buying, resorting to the cheapest foods—those, in fact, which provided little nourishment. With the advent of the War, the black-out treatments for the windows threw the house into further gloom. They ate less, gloomed more. No one will ever be able to get fully behind that sad story. The three of them became quite weakened.

The neighbours on both sides kept their eyes out for the old folks. By this time the three of them could have been on the pension, but either they were too far gone into their seclusion to know this, or too proud to receive it. Then the sad climax happened.

The neighbours conferred. Old Mr Hippie had not been seen in the garden for some days. They knew the two women were by no means strong, and they feared that some accident had happened. When they knocked at the door, there was no response. They made their way in and saw the two sisters, dead in their beds. Old Mr Hippie was unconscious. They called the police and the ambulance, and the sisters were taken to the morgue and the old man to a hospital. The two women had weakened and died through slow starvation, and the old man himself had barely survived it.

When Mr Hippie had been helped back to health, the psychiatrist suggested he should be kept and helped by relatives if they could and would, or be put into a private hospital. There were no offers by the family, who were having struggles of their own, nor were there sufficient funds to permanently hospitalise him. He was sent to the mental hospital.

Ironically enough there had been sufficient money for the three old folk to have kept themselves in comfort, but they had lived in the delusion that they were abjectly poor. Their mindset to save had brought them to their death. They were genteel folk, and had had a horror of poverty. To them it was a disgrace. They could not cope with the changing world around them. Had they not been so fearful of spending money, they could have lived.

Now we come to the heart of the story. All I have written so far has really been an introduction to the old man. Understanding this will help you to see the nature of the miracle which came to him.

I have met few people so sensitive as that man. The doctors had diagnosed him as ‘manic-depressive’, and of course he went through the periods that are characteristic of that condition. Diagnosis is one thing, and typical actions part of that mental state, but what have we said of a person called a manic-depressive? Because we can type the phenomena of such a sickness, what does that do for us in terms of knowing *the person* himself? We have the designations of ‘a small man’, ‘a big woman’, ‘an alcoholic’, ‘a gambler’, and so on. Do such terms really type a person? What lies back of, behind, and in these states? No one is a small man: there is only *a man!* No one is an alcoholic: he is *a person* who has been affected by alcohol. What then, in general, is a man or a woman, and what in particular is any given person but a person? Who then knows what it is to be a human being?

Looking back over the years, I often think about old Mr Hippie, and in these days more than ever. In stature he was not tall: medium, I suppose. In physique he was not robust but rather thin, and as I have said before, somewhat stooped. I think the stoop had come from his desire not to look at people or the world. He was always regarding the ground as though everything of deep thought lay there.

Sometimes he looked at you. ‘Peered’ is a better word. He had long eyebrows jutting out, and he kept them that way as a second form of defence. He could hide his eyes under them. Those eyes, when they looked at you, were deep brown, full of intensity. You gathered that he was, in fact, a very shrewd man. His eyes could pierce you if he wished it that way, but so often he did not. He was mostly withdrawn into himself, but he would make assessments

of those whom he met.

He had another protection to use, namely a self-deprecating cough. It was light, tentative, but for all that quite expressive. This cough would sometimes precede a comment such as, 'He is a very self-assured young man', or, 'I haven't seen a young woman quite so determined, for a long time.' Sometimes there would be a continuity of coughs. This presaged a long and deep conversation. If Mr Hippie was in his manic state then he would bring out the most glorious observations, long dissertations, hidden flashes of wisdom, absolutist pronouncements, punctuated with confident coughs, strong assertions, and arguments which were quite cunning because you could not deny them, even though—somewhere—you were uncertain of their ultimate value.

Come the times of depression and the old man would grow cold and silent. He would sit for hours in the chair he knew to be his own, and he would seem to be in a continuous dull dream. Hands on lap, he would be as still as a statue, his head sunk on his chest, his eyes staring at his knees. Occasionally he would shake his head as though in despair. It seemed he would recall the past to correct it, only to find that it defied him. It was sombre, darkly immutable, calmly ruthless and remorseless.

He was one who would suffer remorse. At a certain point he would grip his hands together, twist them as though to fracture the fingers, and thrust them away from himself in despair. He would begin to utter low groans, and after a time loud groans and then shouts. His loose dentures would rattle violently, and his arms would move up and down.

The children would watch—awed and entranced.

Young Charlie, who was a born analyst, would discuss the matter with me, trying to get back to causes, whilst Elaine would slip away to talk the matter over with her mother. The old man would survey young Veronica with steady gaze and say, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear!' He would wring his hands afresh and rise to go out into the garden, where he would be lost in browsing and brooding.

You might wonder why I should spend so much time describing an old man who was a typical manic-depressive, but then I ask, 'What does it mean to be this—a manic depressive? What does it really mean to be a man who has somehow become unhinged in his essential man-ness?' It is in later years that the matter has come to me so powerfully that I am forced to go back particularly to the case of this old man. I suppose in some ways he was one of my typical precedents in regard to the matter of deep mental suffering.

Not that he was the first man I had studied in suffering. I had seen hundreds—even thousands—in the short time of battle in a war zone and three and a half years' length of time in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. I saw various forms of suffering in battle where men were horribly shocked by the vicious forms of destruction, the pressure of continuous horrors—mates killed, savage weaponry, the sharp fear of death and the experience of savagery— but mostly by what they discovered of themselves and in themselves. Being wounded is a traumatic experience which never seems to cease in its effects upon the wounded.

I have fancied that the heart of suffering is the indignity that comes upon the human spirit. It asks, naturally enough, why it should be singled out for such treatment

It comes as a shock to it that some fate or even the Deity. Himself should subject the spirit to pain and suffering. I have learned that each of us has an image of what a man is, or what he should be. We keep demanding perfection of ourselves, especially in the sight of other human beings. Therefore strange visitations of sickness, pain, breaking of relationships and similar tragedies seem to mean either unreasonable injustice or reasonable judgement. It is a bitter thing to have to endure either of these, perforce. Life seems to have no wholesome reason, and this is intolerable to the human mind and heart.

As I hinted above, it seems the shock of discovering what we are, and of what we are capable (or incapable), causes the deepest suffering. Man—it would seem to himself—should be a glorious creature, and feels it most deeply when the indications come to him that this is not the case. Something within him protests that he was not meant to be inglorious, and but for lack of some remedy or prescription he could be glorious: he could be great. When he looks about him for the cause of his indignity, he must find it either within himself, or in other factors which come upon him.

If he blames these factors which come upon him then his suffering will be endless. His failure to recognise his own decisions—whether they be right or wrong ones—to be part of his own choice and thus his moral dignity, will lead him to endless recriminations, raging indignation, and soreness within his spirit. These states of being and conflict can only be healed when he takes responsibility for his own decisions.

I trust you will forgive this modicum of sermonising, I was trying to get to old Mr Hippie and his personal condition.

To give it the name of “manic-depressive” and to describe its typical features, does not lead us to its real nature. Doubtless, medically, there may be elements of the physical system which may be missing and which may be supplied by the use of drugs, thus ameliorating the powerful visitations of mania or depression. What I have sought to do is to understand what goes on in the mind and spirit of people such as the old man, so as to exercise loving empathy and even try to understand the integrity—or otherwise—of the basic human spirit, i.e. that which we call ‘essential’ or ‘ontological’. There could even be the possibility of bringing healing to people so oppressed.

I realised that the old man was suffering because he was a failure. In his own eyes he had failed in his vocation: he was not a good bank manager, when all the indications had been that he was competent in his profession. He had failed a considerable number of investors whom he had advised and those whose investments he had placed. He had failed as a husband and a brother-in-law. They—his wife and sister-in-law—had died as a result of his attitude to life. What, then, had he done which was of any value? Being a regular churchman he had had recourse to God, but without apparent benefit

To be confronted with these factors had been too much for him. At the time of the Depression and the financial crash he had no guilt upon him for his wife and his sister. That was to come later. As a failed person he had lost confidence in himself. This was the greatest shock. Then to find himself alone—without money and without power—was impossible for him to sustain. Only those of us who have found ourselves at the end of a lonely road, utterly lost and helpless, lacking kindly direction, can understand the desolation of the human soul and spirit. The mind is

numbed, the spirit frozen. We cry for some action from our body to come and relieve us of the intolerable burden.

One of the men who has always fascinated me is Fyodor Dostoevsky. Having suffered in Siberia, having companied with men and women in all sorts and conditions of life, he seems able to read the minds and natures of people. Whilst he may have invented many of his characters, yet they are wonderfully consistent, even where they are inconsistent to the eyes of the readers. Their inconsistency is consistent!

I do not claim to have penetrated as deeply into old Mr Hipple as Dostoevsky did into his characters. My wife was gentle and loving with him, and he warmed to her after his first periods of suspicion and unbelief. I saw him visibly change. The look on his face altered. He even moved about with better poise. The delight the children had in his presence was moving to a man who had never been a father. Something of the delight of life would come to him, and yet it would occasion subsequent bouts of great remorse as he seemed to think he did not deserve this 'mildest grace'. I think he berated himself for all this new, unbidden joy.

Something changed in him. Our little family would have a prayer-time after the evening meal. We would chatter away about life and God and His kindness of love. One night he caught the word 'forgiveness' and seemed both entranced and terrified by it. I can remember him firmly grasping the carved wooden ball on the bottom post of the banisters.

He looked at me, settled his vagrant teeth, and said, 'Forgiveness? That is only for special people, good people, eh?' He looked out at me from under his jutting eyebrows.

I could see he was in a sane moment between his rise and fall of moods.

I grinned back and said, 'Good people don't need forgiveness. Forgiveness is something unwarranted.'

He thought about that for a moment, nodded agreement, and said, 'But then some of us are past forgiveness. You can obviously sin beyond the range of forgiveness.'

I was surprised at his lucidity. I quoted, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Then I said, 'Only sinners need forgiveness and so only sinners can have it. If we are not sinners then we are left out.'

He seemed greatly astonished, huffed his cheeks and set his dentures on a new adventure. His remarkable eyes began to brighten. He asked more questions and listened most attentively to their answers.

I felt a quiver in my heart. Like most laymen, I thought myself inferior when it came to matters of mental illness. It seemed to me that such conditions were a barrier to a person hearing the truth. I guess there was the thought that psychiatrists and such professionals knew mysteries we could not penetrate, but I saw the truth penetrate in a simple yet powerful way.

He held on to the ball of the banister and kept a swinging movement in motion as we talked. Suddenly a brilliant light shone for him, and he was thoroughly encapsulated within forgiveness. He was emotional but not with the imbalance of his sickness. I forget the words he uttered, but I knew that he knew he was forgiven. The tears trickled down, as he walked out of his years of darkness, tragedy and failure. If I had respected and believed what people of faith call 'the Gospel', or 'the good news', then that night I honoured it in the highest degree possible

for a human being.

I have learned that you cannot argue human beings into accepting 'good news'. Some are too proud to require it. Some seek to manufacture their own good news, or invent good news far beyond the true good news. Others hug their anger, bitterness and resentment to themselves and refuse so simple a way out of it. So then, what I witnessed that night was a man receiving a revelation.

How beautiful and effective it was. In some way the shock to him of his failure, the gangrenous remorse, the self-berating and self-deprecating operations, seemed to dissolve. Indeed they did dissolve. He was free of them, and his expressions of joy were not manic. They were wholesome. *How* joyful and grateful was he as he was helped to bed that night. The release from those fearful years of broken pride, endless self-recrimination and shameful helplessness was a beautiful thing to behold.

The next morning the effects had not gone. He was at peace, and remained so. Whilst rhythms of his mental illness were still there, they were never radical. I remember that on occasions when they visited him he laughed at some of his symptoms, as though he were an onlooker to them, and not a participant. I am not sure how long it was that he lived after that event, but its actual impact remained to the end.

One of the most beautiful things was his gentleness and humility. The subterranean storms seemed to have quietened. The passions of moods had levelled out to normal human living. He took a deeper interest in the children, talked naturally with my wife and me. He listened carefully to what we shared at our times of family reading and prayer. Somehow he had reached a quiet haven and was

content to be there. He marvelled at the vegetable garden I had managed to restore from the former wilderness, and he delighted in the renewal of the shrubs and plants in the grounds. His old shuffle had changed to a walk, slow thought it still was. He moved with confidence.

The end, when it came, was not drawn out. His bodily weakness left him open to sickness, and in spite of all the care he received he contracted pneumonia. The short sharp bout ended his life. Circumstances prevented me being at the funeral. His gentle sister, our rector, and my wife saw him interred next to his wife and her sister.

Strangely, then, there was no old man, none of his idiosyncrasies like the rattling of his teeth, his tentative cough, his surprise at being cared for and fed, and no sudden exclamations of wonder, especially of the wonder of Divine grace which had stilled his storms, healed his horrors, quieted his passions and given him an unbidden joy. Of course we missed him, although caring for him had taken much time, especially for my wife. She had not only been tender to him but had quite loved him, and of course had cleared a path for him to come to the truth which had transformed him.

Once on a lake almost two millenniums ago a man had spoken sharply to disruptive and dangerous elements as they had brought terrible fear into the hearts of his fishermen companions. The sudden calm which descended upon that lake had brought even more fear, though of a different kind. Their first fear epitomised the terror men feel in their hearts for rebellion against their Creator as they live in a world where there can be no

genuine inner peace. The second fear was a holy one, the kind men feel in the presence of their Redeemer.

Some moments later, those same companions of his faced a demented man, naked from tip to toe, fearsome in appearance, bearded, clawed in nails, unkempt both in body and mind, and horrific in spirit. A thousand demons tormented him day and night until he rushed upon his fellow humans with huge anger and hatred. In a matter of minutes this tortured creature had become a man again, and was clothed and in his right mind, seated with adoration and relief at the feet of the man from God.

Like the old man—Mr Hippie—we all face the failures of our lives. Guilt becomes a lowering sky, dread becomes high waves threatening the flail and uneasy peace that we have known, but the word of forgiveness stills the deep storms within us. Like the tormented and dehumanised host of a thousand demons, we cannot deal with our past. It is then the Man comes and brings the miracle of peace by taking into himself the shame and horror of our own failure.

This is the miracle that calms our spirits, drawing tears of gratitude and responsive love to him who bore within himself the consequences of holy and outraged love, and quieted our consciences for ever. The storms of our sad and guilty lives broke over his head on that cross, into his heart in that suffering, and he bore the dreadful brunt until it was no more.

I sometimes fancy I can hear a tentative cough behind me, and it is the old man seeking to break into my own mind when the rush of suffering comes to me. I fancy he wishes to give some quiet witness to the power of God when I am tempted to doubt its reality. Just to remember

what happened to him is enough to renew the faith of anyone.

The Overcoming

The brilliance is always there,
 The light of glory, the outshining
 Of the ever-present Father.
 The brilliance is seen in creation,
 In daily providences, fresh
 And sustaining. The brilliance
 Is known in the salvific grace
 Calming the conscience, speaking peace,
 Keeping the soul serene.
 The brilliance is always there.

Where there is the brilliance
 The darkness comes. It comes
 Not as overwhelming thickness
 That obliterates the glory
 But as muting dullness, a flat
 Cover of drear neutrality;
 Fight as it might against the pristine,
 The shining effulgence, the love
 That floods the sin-scene
 And the pollution pall,
 The brilliance is never not there:
 But then the darkness battles it,
 Hating the daily war, fearing it,
 But compulsive in its hatred.

They say we walk by faith
 And cannot walk by sight. I believe
 That faith only sees the brilliance
 For darkness has triumphed:
 The inner pits of men are gloomed
 And abject blackness; the pitch of sin
 Obscures the natural radiance,
 Defiling the Supernal Purity,
 Damning the Eternal Holiness
 In unpredictable rushes of rage,
 The fury that evil knows
 When it is suddenly exposed.
 Holiness is ruthless. Its intention
 Is the unrelenting eradication
 Of the infernal darkness.

The red rage is the black fury
 Of the evil things, the fallen celestials,
 The demonically bent, the depraved,
 The wills reversed and the love perverted.
 Some say these are the internal creatures,
 The twisted creatures of warped mind.
 They have no authentic being, no ontology.
 They are what we think they are.
 Darkness is *non est*, the imaging
 Of a fearful mind (fear without reason,
 Terror without truth). Yet
 This anaesthesia of the worldly god
 Is his ultimate triumph: evil obscures
 Its very self in double deceit.

In the day of the deepest darkness
 Light took up arms, climbing

The hacked timbers of a cross, bearing
 The world's sin, the darkness of demons
 And the doom of the Devil; climbed
 By the deliberated descending
 Into the gloomed putrescence
 Of the human depravity, and anarchy
 Of crazed celestials, lusting
 To obliterate the brilliance.
 Love exposed itself—arms widened—
 To the palpitating darkness,
 Encapsulating the stench and slime
 Of suppurating stagnancy,
 The inevitable wasting
 Of the creational beauty.

Within the purity, the holiness of love,
 He bore the utter loneliness
 Of unrelenting hate, the surge
 Of reddened rage and murderous mind,
 The swirling eddies of the murky mists
 And crazed anger at the calmful Father
 As though himself were such
 (Not being such, not such as being),
 Sweating the churning guilt, bearing
 The heaviness of hell, the immolating
 Of the deadly fire, the wrath
 Sent but to purge yet feared
 For its full-felt searing
 Of the inner tissues made for love
 But used for the unceasing hating,
 The despising of the Eternal, the rejection
 Of the immutable Brilliance.

After the crucial beating,
 The Light coming as Dawn after darkness,
 Grey shadows transmuting
 Into seamed light. The breaking brilliance
 Comes as the new birth of the true creation
 Though silently extant, unchanging
 Yet salvific in intent
 Healing in action; vast wings encompassing
 The wounded and the hurt, healing
 By fresh pacific balm. Darkness
 Still seeks to empound the light,
 Batter its impotent fists
 (Mailed and menacing)
 Against the light revelation
 And the love liberation:
 But in vain.

The victory lies within.
 The greater power is Personal,
 Son himself, the verified Victor
 Attested by Cross and grave,
 Sealed by Ascension, but present
 By word and Spirit, operative
 By omnipresent *agape*; omniscient
 By humble love and ceaseless serving;
 Omnipotent by gracious giving.
 Within lies the greater power
 That faith may use, must use
 Whilst unremitting battles rage
 And fiery darts, envenomed arrows
 Come with demonic insistence
 And ceaseless mindless accusation.

The brilliance is always there.
 Darkness is not horrific. Faith sees
 The livid lie, unmasks the pretence
 Of equivalent power. Evil is impotent
 Challenged by faith it retreats.
 Confronted by love its hatred
 Dwindles to piffling dimensions,
 Puerile insignificance. Imagined magnificence
 Of its terrorist pretensions
 Declines into triviality
 And sterile inconsequence.
 Fight as we must against the powers—
 The principalities of darkness—
 Yet our faith is the flooded faith
 And lighted comprehension.
 Against this faith there is no victory,
 No hope for evil. Demons cower,
 Knowing that in the ultimate
 The Cross is crucial, death now doomed
 Gives way to life. The potent sting of sin
 Is neutralised.
 Thus flows the light,

And over all the glow of love
 Spreads in its gentle victory.
 Evil subsides to the last sigh
 And the Kingdom has come.
 Father is all, and Son is Lord.
 Spirit is life and God is God
 And everything to everyone.

THIS BUILDING FAIR

ONE NIGHT when dreaming I saw a place empty of a building. It was true of course that the normal habitations of man were there, but what ought to have been there was missing, and I think at the back of my mind I knew what was absent. It was some building which man needed to have. I knew—and know—that a thatched hut, made of trees or bark, bamboo and palm, is as authentic as a great Gothic building wrought in stone. I know that all we make is temporary. If time enough passes, then all will wear and rot back to simple earth.

However, as I looked I saw a strange thing happen. Two of us had the same mind, though different skills. For some reason or other, one person—the person other to me— had the building and the shaping mind. I sensed mine was the mind of faith, sure that the building would be built, and his the skilful hand and power to build. It seemed that without him the building could not be built, but without me the courage and assurance to build would be absent— *non est*. Behind us both—builder and assured believer— was One whose purpose it was to raise this great edifice.

The man of ability pressed on, unremitting, to his goal For me it was an exercise in joyful wonder, and steady

assurance. We built together, though with the aid of others. Where all the stones came from I did not know. I saw them not as shaped in homogenous conformity— each one like and as the other—but in fact whilst the same in texture, colour and roughly similar, each was a sturdy stone within itself. Each—as is sometimes said—was discrete, having its own being, and more so as they interfaced, holding each other together in strength and immovability.

Both of us I knew—each separately but yet as one—had an image in our minds and intention which was the one. Even so, we both marvelled as the stones came together, in some sense guided by us, and yet themselves knowing each its place. The shape that emerged fitted the image we had—they and us together.

We marvelled as the building grew, stone by stone, as link by link, and to our astonishment it was suddenly complete. Where there had been simple grassed soil was now a building strong, and wide and solid. All who had assisted were in a sense ignorant people—though with a vision that they scarcely knew was theirs. They nodded as they saw it completed, and kept saying, silently, ‘This is it! This is how it was meant to be!’

I could see the silent full satisfaction of the other man—the builder. We both examined it stone by stone, and the whole together. Stone by stone it seemed almost foolish. No stone was perfect in size or shape, and—in a sense— each stone differed from all others. Yet the finished product was one of unwavering unity, or—as they say—‘a unity in diversity’.

I could see the building had no cement, but the work of the masons was such as to make stones inseparable from

other member stones. They sat one upon another, and were compacted together in such a way that I knew storms and winds could not move this impregnable building. I marvelled that, weak in every stone, these stones—all together—formed something other than themselves as component parts of the whole.

I knew the building to be a sanctuary for pure worship, even a house of prayer for all nations. I know that outside this building there was—and is—no other shrine or sanctuary where worship could—or can—be authentic. I will not, however, seek to make a sermon of the matter, or become theological and declamatory. All I knew then was that the building was itself a living miracle, for its time of building was as a moment—although we had worked steadily, not skimping the time and attention required. I knew it was, and is, and will be indispensable to man, to history, and to union with God and His glory.

I was surprised at first by the building, and then I discovered that the building was, in fact, not a building such as I was beholding. The building before me was simply a symbol, although a very powerful one. I saw that in time many have built great buildings such as this one. I had marvelled at the shape and sight and size of cathedrals and their ilk. I had always thought that man saw the greatness of God, the transcendence, the nobility and the excellence of His Being, and had thus built sanctuaries to epitomise Him. They were—so to speak—‘sermons in Stones’.

I confess such buildings had worried me. I thought of their cost, of extravagance in the face of the poverty of so many persons. I also thought of the awe that was induced by size and shape, and wondered how worship of a simple

nature could be had in such buildings. I recognised the greatness of mind, skill and artistry which had been in the minds of the architects and builders, and marvelled at it, but a question had always worried me—'Why build such buildings?'

As I looked at the completed building before us, I knew the answer to my questions: that such an edifice as I was looking upon was a symbol only of the reality of God's people, God's community, Christ's body. Whilst in one sense stone is a living thing, yet it also is static. Christ the living stone, and the living stones—his members—are moving, alive, lively, dynamic and personal. Christ's church may be symbolised, but it is sinful ignorance to make the symbol of it the very reality itself.

I marvelled at what the church must be if its symbol is so strong, so immutable, so beautiful. I suddenly understood the true meaning and nature of history. My surprise and astonishment grew as I saw this unique prayer place and worship sanctuary in the midst of mankind and its history. I was not only overjoyed at what it has accomplished, and will complete, but was also humbled.

Indeed, as humility came to my heart and mind I understood the love and majesty of God. It was in that growing spirit of humility and assurance that my dream finished and I wakened. The dream has finished, but in my inner sight and contemplating the building is imprinted, and will ever remain. As I continually survey it with pleasure, I am not in danger of mistaking the symbol for the reality, or the reality for the symbol.

This Building Fair

This building fair is strong and noble,
Lifting its mullioned heads
Proud to the pure sky. At nights
The stars are clean and bright
Beyond its lofty ramparts,
And in the days of the serene sun
Or the tossing storms seems all to be
Impregnable.

In medieval times they strove
To stress the impregnability
Of cathedrals cloistered,
Of churches strong—wrought on the hills,
The pastures, and the crags—
As eternal, unchangeable as the Lord Himself,
Assuring the worshippers
That God is God, immutable,
And Lord of all history.

So then the building fair and noble
Stood in the times of storm and stress,
Unchanged by wars of man,
Or hatred of the evil powers

That gnashed upon this strong serenity.
 Often within its walls
 The worshippers, freed from stress,
 Sank to their knees in grateful prayer,
 Or lifted their praise in joy
 To the unchanging Lord of all.

One night—as in a dream—
 I saw the stone and shape
 As symbols only of the living church.
 Men make the symbols real,
 As though they were the thing itself,
 That stones alone were strong,
 And Gothic art the holy living Christ,
 The church his body, the very company
 Of his own members.

Symbol is symbol, but no more.
 The living stone is Christ himself
 And all the stones are part of him.
 This holy sanctuary of God
 Is living flesh and blood,
 And flesh that's gone before to God.
 Here in this world or in the celestial place
 Is all that Body, all that Church,
 Not bound by time and space,
 Though much within it.

Against the storm of time, the winds of change,
 The hatred of the evil powers,
 The wars of man, the evil dark,
 It stands as noble and as fair,

Not stationed in one place immovable,
 But living building on the move,
 Cov'ring the mountains and the plains,
 Full wrought with power on hill and dale,
 Deep down in fissures, valleys; high on crags
 And in all places called impenetrable.

This is the living church, Christ's sanctuary of God,
 The place of prayer, the Father's house,
 The temple of the nations. Here they come
 From all the earth to worship Him.
 There is no other place in heaven and on earth
 Where worship can be made.
 Here man redeemed belongs in truth,
 And lives in truth. Oh, building fair and noble
 Our rest and peace in thee,
 Our joy and calm tranquillity,
 Are God's great gift—Himself—
 And us in Him, eternally.

ALL THINGS ARE OURS

Let None of Us Presume

‘**A**LL THINGS are yours.’ At first sight this saying of the Apostle Paul looks fair enough. We might even take such a statement for granted, and say, ‘Well, of course, all things are ours!’ It appears self-evident that we have much. We have most—if not all—things. The folk at the church of Corinth give us fair evidence that they were a pretty dynamic community—what with their gifts, their powers, and their self-assurance. Some have called them ‘triumphalists’, meaning that they never felt they lacked power and victory. For some of them the humility of love seemed weak.

Because of their tendency to triumphalism, Paul had to write, ‘What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?’ (1 Cor. 4:7). Presumption is a damaging thing. The same Paul pointed out that the fall of man came about when man did not give due honour to God and was not thankful (Rom. 1:21). Lack of gratitude means assumption of one’s own powers, yet all we have has come from God.

This last statement is no light one: without God we are nothing. He has created us out of nothing, so essentially we are nothing. By His goodness, however, we are something.

All Things are Ours by Creation

When we ask the question, ‘What do we mean by “all things”?’ then the answer must be, ‘All things that constitute being a human’. This, of course, is a biblical statement. When God created us in His likeness and image, then we were intended to reflect every element of God in His Being. We cannot be wholly sure of what this means, but we can be generally certain that it means true moral action. When God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7), then we assume he was given everything that makes him a man, and so he possessed ‘all things’. Psalm 8:543 says,

*Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honour. Thou hast given him
dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the
sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.*

Paul later said, ‘For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving’. He added, ‘God... richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy’. We may assume then that man—as created by God—lacked nothing he needed in order to be

man, and live as man. It is important for us to realize that the whole of man is something of a higher order and richer content than anything in the universe—excluding God, of course. When we are told that men shall judge angels, it must mean man is higher than even the celestial creatures albeit he is ‘for a little while lower than the angels’. It must have been extraordinarily rich, beautiful, and satisfying to be wholly man, i.e. created man! Being male and female under those conditions must have been glorious, since both—together—represented the glory of God to the whole of creation. For God to breathe into man the breath of life, and for man to become a living being, really defies our efforts at explanation of that event, and of its results.

MAN IS NOTHING WITHOUT SUPPLY

Some scholars claim that man—as man—was disgusted on discovering his finiteness. The serpent convinced him that were he to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would pass beyond the boundaries of finitude. He would become as God. The range of his being and activities would surpass his present limited (creational) being. When we take some philosophical term and apply it to our human situation, we miss the true term which appears to approximate to it. In this case it was not finitude which concerned man but ‘creatureliness’, i.e. continual dependence upon God to be man. Man, the creature, is dependent upon God, the Creator. That was his problem. He wanted to become independent and freestanding. By nature of the case this was impossible! Man is

not man—indeed, is nothing—without supply. The supply is never stinted. It takes a lot to be man, and all of this is given—continually—by God. Man, then, can remain man! With supply man is man, and that is quite a thing!

MAN’S LOSS OF SUPPLY

Man’s fall from his first place of living came through giving in to the temptation of the serpent, ‘You shall be as God [or, gods]’. At that time man died to God. He was virtually dead, although he had continued existence. Certainly he could no longer be called ‘true man’. The Bible depicts man as being dead in sin because of that original sin, and calls his actions ‘dead works’, i.e. the works of a dead man (cf. Heb. 6:1; 9:14; Eph. 2:1, 5). There can be little that is more terrifying than this—man a dead creature; dead, yet not dead; existing yet not living! Man, to become man again—and truly man—must be enlivened, i.e. brought to regeneration, and this can only happen by a miracle, i.e. new birth, through Christ, the word of God, and the Holy Spirit (John 3:34; II Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; I Pet. 1:23). The supply for man to be truly man again is required after this radical and dynamic way of grace.

THE NEW PERSON HAS EVERYTHING

From the point of Paul’s statement, ‘All things are yours’, to the point we are now making, we have had to traverse a

rather theological bit of thinking. No matter! If the idea can come through to us that we are wholly dependent upon God as both Creator and Redeemer (Re-Creator), then our little journey has been worthwhile. Now we want to see what it means to say, 'We have everything!'

By 'everything' we really mean 'everything that is needed for man to be man, i.e. persons to be persons in all fullness'. This will become more apparent when we see that fallen man virtually had nothing. Terrible statements are made concerning him, such as: his heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; the imagination of his heart was evil from his youth; he was dead in trespasses and sins; he had turned from the way of peace; he was altogether wrong; he walked the paths of ruin and misery; and so on. In this sense man had nothing, i.e. no moral power, no true spirituality, and so on.

Against this Peter tells us, 'His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness' (II Pet 1:3). Paul says, 'All things are yours', and also says that God 'has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places'. These statements—for the moment at least—are sufficient to show us that we lack nothing for the pursuit of true human living.

THE IMMENSITY AND SOURCE OF OUR 'ALL THINGS'

If we are clearly certain that we have nothing but what God has given, then it will not merely be miserly gloating

but personally beneficial to see what He has given, so that we will know the supply and use it, i.e. the things so freely given to us by God. It will be a practical counting of our blessings so that we may know what we have to utilise in the time of need.

Paul tells us that our Source is God Himself: 'In him we live and move and have our being'. Nothing more comprehensive could be said. Paul tells us that we can be 'filled with all the fullness of God', and shows us that this is through Christ, for God 'has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places'. This is because God 'is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption'.

If we pause to think about these fine statements we will see that we have nothing apart from Christ. Christ is actually the wisdom of God which is expressed and worked out in our righteousness [justification], and sanctification and redemption—three basic things required of us, and immense in their significance and operation. The whole matter of justification, sanctification and redemption is the substance of our lives in the new man, Christ.

In the Colossian Epistle Paul goes on to make statements concerning the riches of Christ. Firstly, Christ is the Creator of all things, and the 'all things' are earthly and heavenly, compassing powers and authorities, thrones and dominions, i.e. powerful celestial creatures who help to run the affairs of God and man. In him alone 'all things' have their being and integrity, and hold together. Christ must have vast powers to uphold the universe by 'his powerful word', i.e. 'his word of power'.

Secondly, in Christ 'all the fullness of God was pleased

to dwell'; hence in him 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'. These are what Paul calls elsewhere 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' which are the 'manifold wisdom of God'. The main point for us is that we 'are filled full in him' (Col. 2:10), or, 'have come to fullness of life in him' (RSV), 'are complete in him' (AV). In practical terms this means we lack nothing, i.e. we have all the resources we need for life, including the completion of salvation, and the defeat of evil which will seek to destroy us as we proceed in the way, as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. At this very point, and during this work, all the resources of God are within us to 'will and to work for his good pleasure'.

ALL THINGS ARE OURS

In I Corinthians 3:21 Paul says simply, 'All things are yours'. The context in which he says this is that of a number of leading teachers. Those at Corinth had divided themselves into groups, each claiming to be of a certain teacher. There were those who would see themselves as 'the Paul party', others as 'the Apollos party', and yet others as 'the Peter party'. In Paul's view this was infantile. All that Paul, Peter and Apollos taught was the common apostolic truth. Faith and practice were similar. Why then divide into parties? We can assume that—as today—some persons were insecure and wished to say things in a certain way to fortify and prove themselves.

Paul's point was as follows: 'You have everything that belongs to Paul, Apollos, Peter and others. When God gave you the gift of life and the gifts of grace which go with

that life, then He withheld nothing. Don't oppose Paul to Apollos and Apollos to Paul, or to Peter. Everything they have is yours'. What Paul was saying was phenomenal. He meant that God had withheld no good thing from those who loved Him, but that they were limiting themselves by confining what they received to the teaching and ministry of one man! In fact they were not even grasping what that one man was teaching, since Paul, Apollos and Peter were not sectarian and cultic. Paul was saying, 'All things are yours!' and Peter was writing, 'His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence'. To this he was adding—in favour of Paul—'So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him'. It is quite stimulating to allow this broadness of vision to capture us.

At the same time we need to be practical and know what are these 'all things' which are ours, as well as understand their purpose and use.

'THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE'

If we can understand that at creation—quite apart from grace—God gave us all things which we need in order to be truly and fully human, then we will not say they are 'of grace', but just of the order of God's love and His intention in creating us. We do not have to see them as 'of grace'. Anything which we have lost through our sin and which God restores to us can be said to be 'of grace'. In this we would have to include also all that God had planned for our future, such as ultimate glorification. That, too,

would have been lost in the fall of man. God's grace restores us not only to a regenerated state, but takes us on to the glorified state. All of this we can rightly call 'the riches of his grace' (Eph. 1:7; 2:7; cf. II Tim. 1:9; I Cor. 2:7).

What is difficult for humans to understand is that grace is not simply an attitude or act of God which He effects out of His dynamic deity. Grace is costly to God. He does not just think salvation and glorification into being. To effect these things He must send His Son to be a human being in a world of lost humanity. Not only must he live as a man but he must die as a sinner. The whole weight of human suffering must descend upon him, and the terrible experience of dereliction take place so that Jesus as Man is separated from God as God, hence: 'My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?' A Psalmist once said, 'The ransom of a man's soul is very costly'.

Grace, then, is not mere tolerance on the part of God, a warm and benign attitude which virtually disregards sin. To the contrary: grace is God's severe judgement on sin in the flesh and person of His own Son, without which grace can have no true basis. The new life of the redeemed person—from conversion to glorification—is effective only through the constant personal grace of the Father and the Son as they work through the 'Spirit of grace', i.e. the Holy Spirit.

The Continuing Problem of Human Guilt

We can understand the problem of guilt which faces a person outside of God. When the Spirit of God works on him to bring him a conviction of sin, of righteousness, and

sins of judgement, then this person can live in constant terror. All human beings suffer from the guilt of being less than what they were created to be. This 'fear in the gut' never quite leaves them. It becomes a false spur to self-justifying ways of life. It keeps man in torment. To be delivered of this by God's action of the forgiveness and purification of his sins and the receiving of His gift of justification is truly to know relief from guilt. So exhilarating is this experience that it would appear that guilt were now banished for ever.

The experience of all Christians is that it returns. Why and how it returns we may not know; it is enough to try to cope with it. How, then, do we cope with it? Do we ignore it? Is it false guilt? Has grace disappeared? Must we now set out on a post-conversion routine of justifying ourselves by holy living? The questions which arise are many, but none of them is to any point. The truth is that our resources are endless because they are the resources of His grace. To talk about 'the riches of His grace' and then not believe in them, or to consider them inadequate for our needs, is close enough to blasphemy. What, however, we can understand is that many Christians do not know the various ways in which the grace of God operates.

Grace is not an abstraction, i.e. just an idea or a concept. Grace is the very action of God as He does good to man, and especially His elect, i.e. 'those who love Him'. Grace is not a commodity. It is not a thing or an element we can obtain from God and use as we have need of it. It is called 'the grace of God', or, 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ'. It is, then, the personal action of the Father and the Son restoring us from what we have been to what God wishes us to be.

From the practical point of view, grace means the following: *‘God is always present to us in every detail, thought, and act of our lives. As we face difficulties with guilt, with evil powers warring against us, with inadequate understanding of our situation, and with the demands of the law of God, the command to proclaim the Gospel and to witness to Christ, God enables us to proceed in the situation according to His wisdom and—of course—our willing obedience.’*

This means we never lack the resources for what is required of us in any situation.

THE RESOURCES ARE FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH

We have to keep in mind that these marvellous promises we have been considering are not just theological talk! They are as real as God Himself. They are God in action! But then God is not seen. He is Spirit. He is heard, but then only through His word. He is the God who acts, but only by the obedience of faith do we see His acts, hear His word, believe Him for who and what He is. All of this is by *faith*. When His servant tells us ‘All things are yours’, do we then believe Him? Do we explore the ‘all things’, or do we feel so poorly, so craven in ourselves, so unextended that we think it immoderate to believe that He loves us beyond even our dreams and longings?

This is our problem. We have a kind of loyalty to the text of the Scriptures, but something within us says that what is written is too good to be true, or it is written for others rather than us, and if for us, then not for this moment and this situation. The immediacy of God’s promises and His actions is frightening to us. This first

tinge of unbelief becomes a fully coloured thing, and we are—though temporarily—out of faith.

Once ‘out of faith’, our inner spiritual sight, our spiritual insights, our stability of faith seem to vanish like a wraith into thin air. The thought that ‘all things are ours’ gives way to ‘nothing is mine’. We are now back on the old treadmill of guilt that denies grace, guilt that demands expiation by deeds of concocted obedience, i.e. obedience so-called. We are again trying to prove ourselves, when in fact long ago—in Christ—God proved us, i.e. justified us, and brought us into our truly human state through love, forgiveness, and regeneration. His grace keeps us in this state in the face of great opposition and difficulties, but that grace has to be believed. When He says, ‘Go in peace: your faith has saved you’, He is really saying, ‘My grace has saved you, but you must believe it, and then you will be at peace’.

‘YOU KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST’

Paul’s statement in II Corinthians 8:9 commences with, ‘You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’. The question is, ‘Do we really know Christ’s grace?’ In II Corinthians 6:2 Paul points out that it is possible to receive the grace of God in vain (in an empty way). Fortunately Paul goes on to point out the grace of Christ: ‘though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich’. The question is, ‘What was this poverty into which Christ came, and by what means did he make us rich, and what, then, are these riches?’

MAN'S POVERTY

We have already seen something of man's poverty: he is dead in trespasses and sins. He is in the form of a zombie, i.e. dead while he lives, going through the motions of living, but merely existing. He does not know God. He suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. He hates God and is at enmity against Him. His own life is awry, far from the love, peace, and joy that is the lot of true man. He is all these things and more, but is unaware of his spiritual bankruptcy, his moral inability, his total powerlessness to save himself, but lives in the high pride which deceives him into thinking he can make things right with God, with man, and with himself. He lives in this delusion.

CHRIST'S ORIGINAL RICHES

Of these we know little. We can barely conceive of the glory this Word of God and Son of God had when he was in the glory of his Father before the world began. Our minds—and hearts—boggle at the thought that everything came into sight and being by his great creative powers, and that everything subsists, now, only by that same power. We would tremble if we were seraphim, bow down in adoration if we were celestial elders, cry out in angelic praise if we were heavenly creatures, but we think little of Christ's pre-Incarnation greatness, and his inexhaustible riches of being. We are dull accountants in assessing the glory—and the glories—of Christ-before-time.

LEAVING THE GLORY

'Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor.'
Philippians 2:643 has it,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

This does not mean he emptied himself of himself—a thing impossible by nature of the case. No: he emptied himself of those great glories which would bedazzle man, and make him—Christ—a super-creature in the eyes of all who would have seen him. He did not empty himself of his deity, but then did not use that deity to effect his own true manhood. He became truly man, not only then, but for ever! Whilst his deity co-existed with him, he did not expose it to man, or call it humanity.

Nor was there any reluctance in his coming. He had that mind which 'considered others better than himself', and which 'looked to the interests of others' (see Phil. 2:34). That is why he desired to come, to leave his great riches of glory, to become as dependent as man (should be) on the Godhead, and walk in the true way of man, with humility before his Maker. It may sound strange to say that he 'considered others better than himself', but when we see that this means he put us before himself, then we begin to see his great love and humility. When we say, 'He considered our interests before his', or, 'this interest was to be interested in us', then we see the true nature of the Godhead. It tells us in one breath how poverty-stricken we were, how rich he was, and how poor he became on our behalf.

Even so, we must not think of him as humiliated, i.e. having his pride crushed by the Incarnation and the Cross. To the contrary: his Incarnation is the brilliant expression of the nature and love of God. His Cross did

not humiliate him, since he who is humble is never humiliated. In any case it is said, 'he humbled himself, which was the act of his will, and not compelled by another. He had to be humble to receive the incredible degradation of man into himself on that Cross. He who was pure and spotless had to be humble in order to receive the filth and pollution of mankind into his own spotless conscience.

THE POVERTY OF CHRIST

This is what we call the poverty of Christ—the receiving into himself of the total evil of mankind. To become the true sufferer, to be made sin, to take upon himself the iniquity of us all, and to bear in his body the sins of us all, is what called for immense reserves of holy love. To bear our griefs and carry our sorrows is to suffer the horror and gruesomeness of all sin, and alienation from God.

The demands that this suffering made upon him called for all the resources he possessed as man. We are always confronted with 'the mystery of godliness' in Christ. On the one hand he was truly man, not less than man, and in his humanity not more than man. When he emptied himself—as we have seen—he did not empty himself of himself, for he was truly God. What he laid aside was the right to call upon that deity so that he might effect his humanity. What was his right by reason of his being truly human was to call upon all the resources of the Godhead in order to live out that humanity in its true form. How his deity and humanity co-existed in his person without prejudice or detriment or incongruity, one to the other, is the mystery that theologians have debated since his

Ascension, and indeed will continue to debate whilst they have breath.

For us the issue is that he drew upon the resources of God in order to offer himself for us. He offered himself 'through the eternal Spirit', so that his being Victim for our sins meant he was 'without blemish', i.e. a pure sacrifice which was holy and acceptable to God. At the same time 'the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all', so that he could 'himself bear our sins in his own body on the tree'. God 'made him to be sin', which means that he became as all the sin of all the human race in order that sin might be 'judged in his flesh', i.e. meet its doom in his body. 'Our old humanity was crucified with him', is the biblical way of saying that all humanity was taken up into his Cross and he became as it!

All evil met at the Cross, which was what Jesus meant when he said, 'The prince of this world is coming', and, 'now is your [evil man's] hour and the authority of [satanic] darkness'. The grim and evil accuser—the devil—came with all his foul hordes to destroy him with the bitterness of the sins of the human race.

This, then, is what we mean by his poverty. All the resources of humanity he had to use in order to redeem the world. We have said he was not humiliated by the Incarnation, and because 'he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death upon a cross', yet the utter holiness of true humanity, and the true holiness of God was ravaged, pillaged, defaced and vandalised in the hours he became sin for man. In this sense he was utterly humiliated. Because he humbled himself, his humiliation was not that of a proud person being humiliated in his wretched pride, but poverty-stricken he was, for his

resources were used in that time of abandonment by God and the abandoning of himself unto death—to all that evil powers could do to him. ‘The ransom of a man’s soul is very costly.’ The cost of the ransom of the world cannot be computed.

*We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.*

Like Mrs Alexander, who was the author of that hymn, we can only remain unable to understand and describe the awfulness and dimensions of his suffering, and the utter poverty to which he was brought when he cried, ‘My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?’

The proof of that suffering and the exhaustion of his resources is heard in his other cry, ‘I thirst!’ Just as physically he actually thirsted from the gruelling experience of bodily crucifixion, so morally, emotionally, spiritually, in his vicarious suffering his resources were wholly depleted. The cry was not a complaint, but rather a witness, the telling out of his utter impoverishment, and what we might even call his ‘bankruptcy’, yet it was the impoverishment of the spirit of man who b, ad rejected within himself ‘all the fullness of God’, alienating himself from that life of God, and so suffering immense and dreadful deprivation. His suffering was to take within himself the poverty of man’s spirit and suffer it until its hurt and pain and shame were exhausted and obliterated. Again it is Mrs Alexander who takes up the matter of his intolerable thirst:

*His are the thousand sparkling rills,
That from a thousand fountains burst,*

*And fill with music all the hills;
And yet he saith, ‘I thirst.’*

*But more than pangs that rack’d him then
Was the deep longing thirst Divine,
That thirsted for the soul of men:
Dear Lord: and one was mine.*

George Herbert too was gripped by the mystery of that love:

*Who would know Sin, let him repair
Unto Mount Olivet: there shall he see
A man so wrung with pains that all his hair
His skin, his garments bloody be.
Sin is that press and vice which forceth pain
To hunt his cruel food through every vein.*

*Who knows not Love, let him assay
And taste that juice which on the Cross a pike
Did set again abroach; then let him say
If ever he did taste the like.
Love is that liquor sweet and most divine
Which my God feels as blood, but I as wine.*

So deep was Christ’s poverty, so terrible his deprivation of God Himself, but for us the source of fullness ‘and the end everlasting life’.

THE ENRICHMENT OF MAN

‘... so that by his poverty you might become rich.’ So, finally, we come to the enrichment of man. As created he lacked nothing, so rich is it to be a human, even as against any other creature. We have seen man’s creational richness, yet no creature can fall so low or lose so much as the one created in the image of God.

When the singers sang, ‘All my springs are in you’, then they sang for the whole human race, and in particular God’s holy ones—His elect. It is natural to man to hunger and thirst after God, even as the deer thirsts after the water-brook. They that hunger and thirst shall be satisfied. Jesus said that those who came to him would never hunger and never thirst. He said they would have in them a fountain springing up to everlasting life, and he also said that from them would flow rivers of living water!

These are not just pleasing metaphors, and certainly there is no exaggeration in them. As we have seen, the Incarnation meant that in Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily; that far from his resources being finally exhausted in the Cross, they were replenished by it. He who suffers for others reaps the plenitude of love. That is why Paul could speak of ‘the inexhaustible riches of Christ’, and say that in him ‘are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ so that ‘you are filled full in him’. ‘Filled full’ is true, because God had made Christ to be His wisdom to us, in ‘righteousness, sanctification and redemption’.

So rich are these truths and the elements themselves that our minds cannot grasp them. Even so, our spirits can sense and know them. That He has blessed us ‘with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus’ seems so unreal on a day of dullness, but let us be faced by great need and we will know the resources are present. They are present dynamically in the Person and indwelling of the Father. They are present in the Person and indwelling of the Son, and likewise in the Person and indwelling of the Spirit. That is why we sing with the singers, ‘All our springs are in You’.

‘ALL THINGS ARE YOURS’: CONCLUSION

When Paul chided the Corinthians for being party-minded, it was because they were clutching after the riches of one teacher. That teacher did not see those riches the way his listeners did. He saw Christ as his riches, salvation as his fullness, and life in the Spirit as pouring out to others the fullness they needed.

So childish were the party-pursuers that they did not realize they could be ‘filled with all the fullness of God’. They did not realize that their leaders were men who drew from such resources. The immense riches of the nature of God were unknown to them. They had become petty, short-sighted, inverted. The psalmist might have lifted his eyes to the hills, but they were only a symbol and sacrament to him of the hills of God. The physical panorama drew his spirit out to the eternal panorama and he saw the figurements of the mighty ‘Father of glory’.

So with Paul, who wrote,

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!... For from him and through him and to him are all things.

That is why he told the immature and spiritually stunted believers at Corinth,

All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.

If all of this sounds high-flown and impractical, then let a believer try to live without God’s fullness. Let him treat his union with the eternal God with indifference, and let him seek to draw for his needs upon his own reservoir! Then he will know his own innate poverty. Then he will

know his meanness of spirit. His life will be occupied with trivia, his mind will dwell on things mediocre, and he will seek to draw some sort of fullness from objects and persons.

If, however, he luxuriate in the grace of God, if he receive from the fullness of love, and if he be given over to 'the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ', then rivers will first flow into him, and then out through him. The measure of such a man will be the measure of the gifts God has poured out upon him. His vision of God will be of His length, breadth, depth and height, so that together— with all saints—he will come to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, the outcome of which is that he will be filled unto all the fullness of God, and his glory will be in the endless variety, diversity and unity of the fullness.

Desolate

Dream or vision—I know not
 I cannot tell, but this I know—I saw!
 Saw as in the Book Itself
 The great white throne.
 In childish mind that throne was white
 But cold and hard as stone—stone itself—
 As though the One upon it too
 Was fierce and stern in judgement.
 Yet now it glowed in pristine purity,
 Its holiness a flowing fire of white
 Glowing within the eyes of those who stared,
 Who looked with dread or viewed with joy
 The Very One Himself.

From Him the heavens, the earth,
 The sea and all therein had fled,
 And where I know not; before those eyes
 Nothing could bold remain,
 Nothing sustain those eyes of fire
 That gazed upon the massive multitude.
 I thought I heard the sighing of the seas—
 Now fled afar—as though the wind in pines
 Had made some sorrowed song.
 All things held breath in terror

Or in joy—I could not tell—
 But only sense the throb within my heart,
 The fire within my brain.

I saw the kings and queens,
 The men of might and victory,
 The rich, the poor, the simple and the great,
 And none was proud in looks
 And none dared gaze in scorn.
 All lips were stopped, the facile wit,
 The pride of life. All knees must bow
 To Him who is the King, to Him who judges all
 And gives in justice what is meet for man.
 He gave the breath of life,
 His power's thrust to every human heart.
 Now each must face his Lord
 For grace's reckoning.

No thing was veiled from mind or eye,
 No hidden thought, no act concealed,
 But all was written as it were
 Within the books of deeds.
 Some deeds were vile and some of love,
 Some hellish, some of paradise
 But none was lost and in each heart
 Conviction came with terror or with joy,
 Delight or pain, or deadly shame.
 I wondered as I watched
 And knew the horror that they knew.

I heard the sigh as I had heard before,
 Knowing it rose from man; no breeze

Could hold within itself the fear and pain
 As now I sensed then knew, myself
 To be the outcome of our history's age.
 The sigh was frozen in the hearts of men
 As judgement came from Him to them,
 And they were banished from His sight.
 I wondered 'til I saw the Book of Life
 Shining unsealed, each name read out
 With simple speech: each name
 A commendation in itself to each
 Who heard that name and cried with joy
 Upon the grace that brought them there
 For liberty eternal.

That lake of fire! I know not how
 My mind could know, my mind could tell,
 These lips bring warning 'gainst that hell
 That first is in the heart of man—hard guilt
 That feeds rebellion's ceaseless flames,
 Enlarges evil's scope and score
 And damns—self-damns—the impenitent
 Hard pressing God with hate and scorn,
 Until the life dies out, and in its place
 Most deathful death for ever throned
 Takes down to death's own death.
 Between the sin, between the hate,

Between pollution and the dreaded shame
 He interposes love. The Cross of pain
 Absorbs the evil and the filth,
 The dread of lostness and the fear
 Of single loneliness, the eternal tears

That never can remit the guilt.
 He interposes His eternal love
 To woo the sternness of man's heart
 Until as son he turns
 Back to the Father, and the Father's home:
 Back to the true estate, the authentic heir
 Of all that grace has stored for man
 Within His Redeemer-Love.

The sigh I felt within my mind,
 The ache I knew in human heart
 Were not of pity but of shame
 That we—once born of Holy Breath—
 Should choose the death instead;
 Should choose to never look upon His face,
 Taking ourselves to His—yet our—
 Appointed place. So sorrow grows
 But hearts resolve afresh to tell the grace
 That men might come with joy
 To His—yet our—appointed place.

THE JUSTIFIED MEN AND THE GREAT PEACE*

An Essay on the Peace which Comes from God's Grace and Sets Man at Rest

INTRODUCTION: REVIEWING THE MATTER OF INJUSTICE AND OFFENDED RAGE

IN OUR study of 'The Justice-Men and the Great Rage', we saw that man is justifiably angry at anything which is unjust, but that it is difficult to avoid going overboard with that anger. To 'be angry and sin not' is not a simple task. I imagine that when Jesus told his listeners to turn the other cheek when first slapped on one cheek, he meant, 'Don't react in anger to those who persecute you'. Peter in his First Letter comes close to saying this: 'For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and

* This study is a companion one to 'The Justice-Men and the Great Rage', and is intended to follow that study and complement it.

suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval'.

We also pointed out that God has the matter of avengement and retribution in hand for those who have been unjustly treated. He 'speedily avenges', although in our time-reckoning that speedy avengement often seems so tardy. We also saw that Paul argues that to avenge oneself is to get in the way of God's true justice. We are handing out 'justice' when God alone should do this. He is the lawgiver, and He must be the one who requites justice. This is not to say that no justice must be worked out in human history, for 'the powers that be are ordained of God', i.e. all judges, magistrates, and others are delegated—in some way or another—to carry out justice as the present requires it. The ultimate judgement, and the right apportioning of punishment, will surely come in the final judgement.

The practical problem we face is how can we be righteously angry about evil and injustice, and yet not slip over into self-righteous anger, and with it into a judgemental and avenging spirit. I suggest we remember our own innate sinfulness, our many failures and the injustices we do and yet excuse, and see that what others do is probably little worse—if at all—than the things we do. In this mood we may at least understand something of Jesus' prayer when he said, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do'. Doubtless we all know what we do, but we often do not recognise the enormity of its evil. To do so is so to humble us about ourselves that we will not quickly be condemnatory of others.

Of course the problem of injustice will remain with us in practice. If we refuse indignation at moral evil, callous-

ness and cruelty then we will become the victims of uncaring. We will ourselves become calloused. We must keep morally sensitive and uncompromising, and yet keep a right attitude of mind regarding injustice. This will be particularly so where social justice is concerned. If we see social injustice then we must do what we can about it.

Without qualifying what we should do, we also need to see that the issues are not simplistic ones. Many factors combine to make a situation where people starve, are victims of natural disasters and victims of cruelty, oppression, human greed and political corruption. Some of the conditioning factors are human—human greed, human ambition, human selfishness, and the like. Often we cannot obliterate these. Without becoming insensitive to suffering, we need to see that nothing happens in human history that is outside God's sovereignty or His planning. This theological understanding should not make us *laissez-faire* or careless about injustice, but it should temper the way we go about things. Most of all, we must prevent ourselves becoming so angry at injustice that we take those practical steps which may turn out to cause more injustice than the injustice which has angered us!

One of the things we must beware of doing is being God to others or for others. For example, we may become very angry on the behalf of another, even to the point of trying to requite an injustice done. The fact is that the one to whom the injustice is done should have the right to decide (i) his attitude to the happening, and (ii) the way in which he would wish to see justice done. It is wholly wrong to say, 'I can't forgive that person who has done this injustice to my friend'. I do not have either the right to

forgive or to refuse forgiveness, for the sin or injustice was not done against me.

Other factors complicate the whole issue of justice. For example, we may have anger at authority as a thing in itself. We may have personal anger at parents, teachers and others in authority, and because of this assume that our anger is right and all authority is wrong, and those who are in authority are wrong. We may have biases and prejudices where—in fact—we consider ourselves to be generous, kindly, understanding and good. It is universal to have ‘hidden agendas’ of which we may be unaware and which greatly condition us in the conclusions we come to hold.

In fact we can rightly ask, ‘Where is the dispassionate, truly objective and honest man or woman, who can see things fairly, judge them calmly and rightly, and then dispense justice in a fair manner, according to his personal ability?’ Probably the answer to this question will have to be, ‘There is no one’. No person on this earth is wholly free from bias or prejudice, and there are few who do not want to play God to the human situation.

As we come now to consider justified men and their peace, we are not looking for a way to cut men off from seeing injustice and doing justice. Indeed to be justified and be careless about injustice would surely be a contradiction of being in the justified state. No, whilst we emphasise the need to be justified, it is not just in order to be able to view injustice rightly. The fact and experience of justification has nothing in mind, primarily, but that a man ought to be justified, that God has planned for him the way of justification, and that he must be justified under pain of destruction from guilt and coming judgement.

THE NEED FOR MAN TO BE JUSTIFIED

One practical way of answering this question is to examine man as a seemingly just person. Biblically, to be a just person means to act fully in accordance with God’s law. That no one has succeeded in doing this does not mean that it is not a practice demanded by God, for it is. A person who has guilt will find it difficult to be righteous. His failure and guilt put him on the wrong side of law, although his inner being may acknowledge the rightness of law, and even hold a desire to be obedient.

The Judge of all the earth does right, but no man lay claim to such a state of being. If in simplicity and honesty we acknowledge the *fact* of our guilt, then we could be well on our way to a solution of it. Who, though, makes such an acknowledgement? Few, if any. They may make a *legal* acknowledgement, but not a personal one, Biblically it takes the Holy Spirit to bring a human being to a conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement. natural man must be supernaturally convinced and convicted.

There are reasons for this. One is that sin has its own inbuilt ability to deceive. Called ‘the deceit of sin’, it rationalises away the nature and enormity of our sins. We are content for it to be that way because we have to live with consciences which accuse us. The conscience is a dynamic faculty that man would wish to be without, so that he could live without a sense of guilt. The conscience is a bit like the sensory nerve system in a person, in which feeling approximates to awareness of sin, and pain to the consequences of having done wrong. Sufferers from Hanson’s disease (formerly called ‘leprosy’) do damage to their

bodies because the sensory system with its pain warnings is unable to alert the sufferer. Likewise to harden ('sear') one's conscience is a dangerous matter, and far from relieving a person of suffering, it ultimately causes a terrible moral retribution to the conscience-killer.

All of this is preliminary to saying that man has a desperate need to be justified. To be *justified* has been roughly described to be 'just-as-if-I'd never sinned'. This is a fairly approximate description of justification. We use the word every day, and often. We say, 'I'm not justified in doing that'; 'My action was certainly justified'; 'This person is always justifying himself'; 'The end justifies the means'; and so on.

When we visualise ourselves as having no guilt whatsoever, and no one having any grounds to accuse us, then the thought is very powerful. To be unaccusable, unindictable, and wholly unguilty, is a state and condition none of us has ever known, nor could know. We would like it to be this way, and we even argue and rationalise ourselves through to a state approximating to this, but we know that in fact we are all guilty people. The fact that we accept this as a state of life, and try to come to terms with it, shows how universal it is.

The finest statement on man's sinfulness and God's justification of the sinner is found in Romans 1:18 to 3:1. This section of Paul's Letter does not say everything, but at least enough to help us. In essence Paul says that God has the fight to reveal His wrath on that which is evil. He then argues that evil is something we chose—and choose—to do, and it will always be punished. God's wrath is primarily that He gives us up to the matter of our sin and guilt, and that the experience of sin and guilt is the way of

God's wrath. In the misery of sin and guilt our acts are such that they compound our guilt and our misery. Paul is quick to point out that being a Jew makes no difference, for all men are sinners. He talks about the wrath of God, not simply to frighten or bludgeon people out of their sinful state, but in order to show that it is precisely *sinners* whom God justifies. That is to say, He is doing something about that wrath which we justly deserve. He is seeking to save us from it.

That God justifies *sinners* comes as a surprise to readers of Paul, in Romans 3:19-24. Paul speaks of two righteousnesses of God, the first being expressed in the law. The law shows God's righteous nature and man's unrighteousness. The second form of God's righteousness is His justifying righteousness. By this we mean that God accounts as righteous those who are sinners because of Christ's atoning work of the Cross. If all Gentiles and Jews will acknowledge their need for this righteousness of God to justify them, then His act of doing so will have point and purpose for those who are sinners. If a man is not a sinner then he is just, and the law will acknowledge that. In fact the law has yet to discover a man—apart from Jesus Christ—who is a righteous man. Jesus himself said— though not without a certain irony—that he had come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

How then does God justify sinners? The answer is that He does it by means of the act of propitiation, or, as we say, 'atonement'. Atonement means 'at-one-ment'. Propitiation is that act of God which averts His wrath from sinners because in it His Son becomes the sacrifice or atonement for their sins. His wrath is certainly poured out on our sins, but upon our sins as they are borne by Christ

on the Cross.

There are various *theories* of this atonement act of God, but whatever their virtue may be, they cannot conduct us to the reality and effectiveness of the act of propitiation. We are told by the apostle John that God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (I John 4:10), and by the apostle Paul that God ‘set him [Jesus] forth’, or ‘put [Jesus] forward’ to be a propitiation. This statement must mean that since God put him forth in propitiation, then that act of propitiation was first *His* act, and secondly that it must therefore have been satisfactory to God. It was no human transaction or action.

The words in which Paul describes this are,

They [sinners] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

Doubtless this kind of language is not the language we use much in these days, but it is still sensible, and has a rich meaning for those who will explore it. The essence of it is as follows: ‘All human beings have sinned, but God has accounted righteous those who have sinned because Jesus Christ has been made to be the propitiation for sins through what he has suffered on the Cross. This we call the grace of God because He initiated it, and it is satisfying to Him. So then, by the gift of His grace—i.e. undeserved by us—He has justified those who will have faith in Him, in Christ, and in the work Christ has done. Formerly God did not destroy men for their sins, for He used forbearance in this regard, but now by the act of the Cross He has

dealt with those sins, and by doing so has showed Himself not to be unrighteous but to be righteous, so that He rightfully justifies the sinner.’

For many folk even this explanation will be a bit bewildering. Very well, then, let us look at a quote which Paul uses from Psalm 32. It is found in verses 7 and 8 of the fourth chapter of Romans, and says,

‘Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin.’

In practical terms it means that God has accounted all people who have faith to be righteous. Their sins are forgiven, their guilt removed, and they are accepted by Him. How He has done this does not matter. If we believe He has done this, then we are the recipients of an counted righteousness’. We are guiltless. Paul caps it by saying, ‘There is therefore now no condemnation [judgement] for those who are in Christ Jesus’, or, ‘being justified by faith, we have peace with God’.

Anyone reading this article or essay should forthwith receive God’s forgiveness and removal of guilt by a simple act of faith. He is then entitled to see himself (or, herself) as a justified person. He can now say, ‘I’m just as if I’d never sinned’. How wonderful!

We can now go on to discuss the heart of our essay, namely ‘The Justified Men and the Great Peace’.

THE PEACE OF GOD FROM THE GOD OF PEACE

We repeat Paul’s statement of Romans 5:1: ‘Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God

through our Lord Jesus Christ’.

To have peace *with* God is also to have peace *from* God. Firstly we discover that when we are justified by God, the past with its guilts and sins has no more control of us. Sins and guilts have been finished by God in the Cross because Christ himself ‘bore our sins in his own body on the tree’. The conscience that troubled us because of these sins—especially in the memory of them—no longer troubles us. One Scripture says, ‘the blood of Christ... purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God’.

Once the conscience is purified we no longer have a ‘conscience of sins’ or a ‘sinful conscience’. This is a matter of great peacefulness to us. We are no longer fearful of God or of judgement. We are at peace with God, with others, and with ourselves. This is what we mean by ‘the great peace’.

It is universally well known—shalom. In most Eastern lands and cultures the salutation of peace is given, but behind it is much the same idea, for in wishing peace the one saluting means, ‘May you have quietness, joy, serenity and security’. All these ideas are intended. They necessarily carry the idea of being at peace with God, with man, and with oneself, and also with the creation about us. The modern Western greeting, ‘Have a good day!’ or ‘Good day!’ certainly intends something of the same idea.

Why has man generally been without peace? The answer must be that he is out of joint with God, himself, others, and his world. This came about originally through man’s rebellion against God, in what we call ‘the fall of man’. From having affinity with God, being in His image, having great attributes and useful actions, he became centred on himself and so is egotistical. For that reason he

is dislocated in his being. His guilt holds him back from God and even makes him hate God. Being out of kilter with God he is out of kilter with others, for God is love and all true relationships find their origin and continuance in Him.

No one can assess the lack of peace that sinful man knows—apart from justification. His inner being is troubled, he has no genuine hope for the future. The Scriptures say, ‘the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked’.

In Israel it was known that God alone could bring peace. Prophets tried to soothe the people, but they were accused of crying ‘Peace! Peace!’ where there was no peace, or of healing the wounds of the nation ‘as though they were only a scratch’. The false prophets prophesied, ‘Peace and safety’, and fight on their declaration the nation came into tragedy.

The prophets spoke of a great time of peace which was to come in the last age of man’s history. It is described in very moving words. The peace was to be a universal peace. The ache for *shalom* has always been in the human heart. When Jesus came the angels carolled, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased’. Jesus himself brought peace in so many ways. He stilled the tempest on the sea and brought peace to the hearts of the terror-stricken disciples.

Most of all he brought peace ‘by the blood of his cross’. In some wonderful way he cleansed men and women of their pasts and brought Jew and Gentile into a new humanity. This means that—if we will—all humanity can be at peace. Those who live outside the Cross cannot

find their peace, but yet it is there for them.

No sooner had Jesus risen from the dead and appeared to his disciples in the Upper Room than he used—not once but twice—the shalom greeting. ‘Peace be to you!’ he said, because death had been defeated. That became the greeting with meaning in the apostolic age: ‘Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’. How often that salutation comes through in the apostolic Letters.

These matters are not just things of emotion but of a state of life, an attitude of mind, and a mode of living— peace. It is not simply peace *from* God but the very peace of God given to us.

THE JUSTICE-MEN AND THE JUSTIFIED MEN

We close our essay on this note. We have to determine whether we are simply ‘justice-men’, i.e. those determined to bring justice, and, if we are, whether in this world of sinful human creatures we will ever be able to do so. Whilst we must not desist because the task is difficult, yet we must not persist because our anger drives us on to do so. Our solo attempts in moralistic freelancing may turn us more to anger and bitterness than ought to be the case. An Australian politician who believed great despite had been done to him, told his followers to ‘Maintain the rage!’

We maintain the rage because we want to. It can burn in our hearts until we ourselves are burned out. Justice may or may not come, but if it does we may not have the peace of heart to enjoy it. If we are the justified men then we will not have to justify ourselves by what we do, or by

what we do not do. Indeed we can go out to the turmoil of life, of persons, and of nations with peace in our hearts.

When our hidden agendas are revealed and erased, when we do not have to prove ourselves, to raise our self-esteem or polish and brighten our self-images, then it is that the dynamic of justification is known. In a new way, with a new constraint, and with the rich assurance that God loves us—whatever—we can pursue the life of peace.

Nothing sadder was ever said regarding the human race than, ‘The way of peace they have not known’. Nothing sweeter than the apostolic statement, ‘The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus’.

The Father-Son Cycle

I saw him browbeaten leave the house.
 He and his father had fought these many years.
 The old man was true at heart with love
 But he fumbled his actions: the son misunderstood.

The son was bitter in heart, hot as gall—
 Teeth grinding had started at an early age.
 After a time rage set in and solidified.
 He would cry at first but then freeze hard.

The bending of his back at going from his father
 Was the same angle as the paternal slope;
 And the hurt in the minds of them both
 Was to cause havoc in the years to come.

One day in despair with life the son sought love—
 Hoping illicit union and its supposed delights
 Would heal him—but the woman
 Was a pained daughter. She was seeking the same
 thing.

It was in a blue twilight that their son was born.
 After the first delight the new father knew
 That the old round—father and son—was being
 perpetuated.
 He knew he was not understood of his father and his own
 son.

Only then did the truth burst in upon his brain and
 heart,
 The truth learned in Sunday School, uttered almost
 unthinkingly,
 That God is true Father, that Fatherhood was matched
 By the Son's voluntary and commanded crucifixion.

This was when the son, leaving his own son,
 Hastened to his own father (via the Father's love).
 He wept at the old man's feet, he leaned on his
 shoulder.
 The two slipped into the filial-paternal Cross with painful
 ease.
 With the breaking of the hate cycle came the new
 family.
 Backs straightened and the true heart-ease came.
 I often wonder how many will trace (or retrace)
 Their steps to that old Cross,
 Seeing the Father and Son at their work.

'LAID BACK'

THIS 'LAID BACK' I do not understand. Yes, I surely understand what they mean when they say 'laid back'. They mean, in the new modern idiom, 'cool'. 'Cool, man!' 'I am a cool cat', i.e. 'I have it all made'; 'All is under my control'; 'There is nothing about which to worry.' Yes, I think I know what they mean. Yet I do not understand what is the very essence of this thing—this way of life which they call 'laid back'.

Perhaps you will try to explain to me.

Yes, sir. Yes, my friend. I can explain 'laidback', though I do not know the origin of the term. It means 'calm'. It means there is nothing to worry about. It means all is well in spite of appearances which seem to be to the contrary. It means everything is fine, my friend—no matter what!

That I do not understand. The essence of what you describe still evades me. Are you saying what you appear to be saying? 'Don't be troubled. Let not your hearts be afraid. There is nothing to be afraid of, since God is King over all the earth, since He is Lord of all creation. Just be still and know He is God.' If this is what you are saying, then that is good. It would then be good to be 'laid back'.

No, I am not saying that. I certainly am not saying that. Again, I am saying that—but without needing God to be in the

picture at all. It is 'No worries'. It is 'Everything will be fine. No sweat? It is 'Everything is OK even when it seems not to be OK' It is 'There is a sovereignty of its own which does not require God, or, for that matter, anyone—to be.' All is well, anyway, even if it is not! You know, all is calm. All is OK.

Ah, my friend, you puzzle me. All is not well. All is not calm. All is not OK. Truly, very little is well, calm, and OK. It seems to me that so little is this way.

You see, you fret too much. You make mountains out of mole-hills. You make little into much. It is true that here and there the appearances are that all is not well. Here a druggie, there a sexie. Here an abortion, there a homosexual. Here a corrupt politician, there a failed religionist—but that does not mean all is lost. These things come and go. After a time most, if not all, things pass—what seems to be 'lost' to your view comes, but then it goes. In the old days they said, 'Be philosophical, let things be. Underneath and behind the outward appearances nothing is as bad as it seems.'

Ah, you mean, 'Take it calmly,' or as the Scots say, 'Don't fash yourselves.' You are saying, as the Australians do, 'No worries! She'll be jake, mate! No sweat.'

Yes, something like that, but even better. I am saying—we are saying—'It only appears to be wrong and out of shape because that is the mind you have towards it. It is not really that way at all. If you were 'laid back' you would see it is simply a matter of your mind—that you see such trouble, that you worry over such things.'

So you say. But these things are here—the druggie, the alcoholic, the aborted baby, the parasite pusher, the evil pedlar of drugs, pornography or immorality—they are all here.

Yes, they are here, but then again they are not. You have a

mind to tackle these things nervously and passionately. Your passion is what is foolish. Your compulsion is what is obscene. Just be calm about it all. Take it as it comes, then let it pass. The steam goes out of the matter. Sensibility prevails. All is well. The very calmness is what everything is all about.

You mean that when Jesus wept over Jerusalem it was unnecessary. It was heavily emotional without too much point. You mean that when they cried with joy at his coming to the city that it would have been as good had they given him an understanding smile or turned up their hands as much as to say, 'Don't be intense, preacher! Take it calmly as we do. Don't make conflict! Be calm and it will all pass'?

Something like that. Yes, something like that. Nothing is worth much worrying about—at least not in the ultimate.

I see what you mean: 'God is in His heaven, and all's well with the world.'

Something like that, only it is of no great consequence if God's in a heaven. He may or may not be. The matter doesn't matter. If anything matters it is calmness. That's what matters, but then it doesn't matter really. Nothing matters. Things just are. Things come: they go. How we see them matters, providing that seeing them does not matter—not really.

Ah! Nothing matters. Not belief?. Not action? Not anything? Only being 'laid back'?

Well, being 'laid back' is a way of approaching things and dealing with them by sort of not dealing with them. In not dealing with them they become little, small, and of no great consequence. You save yourself from foolish emotion, from being worn out. You keep your reserves. Maybe you will never need them, but in any case you have not exhausted them.

In that case, Christ could have kept his tears and not

expended them—for all the good they were? He could have spared himself the passion of his confrontation of the Jews and his consequent trial, passion, suffering and crucifixion, and all that matter of dying? He could even have spared himself the grave, and the seeming triumph of his resurrection?

Something like that! Excessive passion can be obscene. It is a pointless disturbance in the order of things. The more casual, the more calm. The more calm, the less devastating. Calmness is all, really.

Now I think I understand. 'Laid back' is 'Avoid confrontation.' 'Laid back' is 'Leave it alone and it will come good—of itself.' 'Laid back' is 'Nothing matters. Leave well alone and all will be good or come good.' Am I right?

You could be—but then, does it matter anyway? It is not being right or being wrong. It is just a confidence that nothing is worth a struggle. Struggling is pointless. Disturbing oneself or others is to no great point. All is a matter of bringing forth wind if we strive—so why do it?

Marvellous! Wonderful! It is just calm faith in nothing! It is having confidence anyway and whatever. Though faith is nothing and is—in fact—not faith at all, yet it is better than creating a disturbance of any kind, since that is nauseous and unnecessary.

Something like that. I am not sure, but then I do not care, since 'laid back' is all.

When the exponent of 'laid back' moved calmly and smoothly away, then the persistent questioner went on cogitating and talking with himself and to himself. The conversation went something like this:

I remember when there was no 'laid back'. People were earnest, sincere and intense about the matter of life, though doubtless much of it was to no point. They became grieved, angry, distressed. Some left homes, marriages, significant relationships. Some suicided. Others sought to live with anger, horror, and shock.

If my friend who is calm, a 'cool cat' and 'laid back', had been able to teach them—had he cared enough to do so—then doubtless they would not have suicided, had excessive discharges of adrenalin into their body systems, nor have needed sedatives and tranquillisers, since 'laid back' is the way of peace. 'Laid back' would have healed society simply on the basis of 'No worry' or 'No care' or 'All will be well—anyway!'

Given in this to be a practical philosophy and a working way of living, what would be the outcome? Would it simply be 'Peace at any price'? And would the price be too high to pay? Given in the gains of this contracted somnambulism, this deliberate non-involvement, would the loss of true will be adequate compensation for no moral struggle?

Is this thing—'laid back'—a deadly form of self-killing? Is it a disease which is attacking the moral nerve of the human race and paralysing its worthwhile spiritual and ethical conflicts? Is it 'Peace at any price' which is but asking the whole price of a true humanity?

I ask, 'Is it cowardice? Is it evasion of true issues? Is it the lie that nothing matters—in the ultimate? Indeed, is it the aping of genuine peace—the authentic *shalom* of God— so that the spirit of man sleeps the sleep of evasion which is the deadly slumber of self-annihilation, the cowardice of which we have been speaking?'

Better a nervous action or chain of actions than no action. Better to be distressed by one's sins than to say there is no sin. Better to grieve over-intensely than to be unnaturally immune to grief and feeling.

My friend has disappeared into the distance, beyond my sight and beyond my recall. It may be that his Hades is a place of silence, of no noise, and no disturbance, but it may well be that the wraiths of his refusal to face reality may haunt him all the days of his eternity, accusing him of evil evasion of the truth. It may be that they will not remain as semi-silent wraiths but come powerfully to life— even ugly and menacing in their actions, as their accusations disturb the self-drugged spirit of the 'laid back' one. In his terror of remembrance he may be prodded to remember and realize that once he had been a man before he had killed himself with deliberate disregard of that humanity and self-contracted forgetfulness of what it is to be truly human before God and man, and all creation.

The Word of God

In the primal innocence
 Primal man knew all,
 Knew what is only needed to know:
 Namely the God who is God
 And all that is His. This man knew
 And in his knowing was fulfilled.
 Innocence is not ignorance, not lack
 Of true knowledge, but knowledge of it
 In trust on the primal Word.
 What is said is so. More than this
 Man need not know

Doubt is the thin insidious spear,
 The penetrating 'Hath God said?'
 Piercing to the innocent heart, inciting
 By insinuation. The breathless leap
 To a knowledge beyond knowledge
 Is the burning temptation. To know, oneself,
 And by one's self. This is power,
 Knowledge that brings the heady illicit joy,
 Emancipating man from God.
 'Godding' him into esoteric understanding.
 Freeing him into a new creation.

The old was good—the true creation,
 The authentic relationship, the primal Love—
 In this was the true knowing
 Never to be surpassed.
 None can outmode or supersede,
 For truth out-truthed was never truth.
 This is the truth, the loving God
 Creating the loving creature man
 In love's creation.

The Word is truth—all truth—
 And none can go beyond.
 To live within the truth, to trust,
 To hear the Word and to obey—
 Man cannot know the more than this,
 Since this is all. None can reach
 To compass truth in all its truth.
 To live the truth is love, the primal Love,
 For Word and Love are one
 Since Love speaks Word
 And Word speaks Love.

Lost in the passionate revolt,
 The reaching out for that beyond,
 Is grasping where is nought to grasp
 And taking in the lie as truth.
 Unword the Word then truth is lie,
 And man bewildered in complexity,
 Of truth distorted, mirrored lie
 Is bankrupt in his wealth of knowing,
 Is angered in his phantom falsity,
 Comparing lie with truth,

Unword with word, until
He lives as truth the painful fantasy.

Where then is truth, what then is wise?
What is the utterance wholly whole?
Where is sagacity itself
And wisdom man requires
Walking as man for man to know
Uttering the language that is his?
There is no word that stems from man
Which in the ultimate is wise.
Except perhaps acerbic phrase,
Astringent bitter clause that bites,
Scorning the wisdom man extols
As errant foolish nothingness.
This is the wisdom of despair
That sights the emptiness of man
And spurns his vanity.

True Word is heard from heaven's vaults,
Or rolls as thunder on man's hills.
It penetrates to rill and vale
In home and hamlet till it fills
All earth and sea, all hills and plains,
Reverberating where it spills
Until all mankind hears its strains
And wonders at the utterance.

Here is the depthless Wisdom man
Requires to purge away the pain,
To full undo the lie he lives,
To give him understanding true

And bring him back to God again.
The hideous lie distorting him,
Unwisdom's cruel power holds
And grips him as a vice. Unpain
Can only come through Word
And teach him innocence afresh

What is this Word? Word Uncreate
That calls to being things unseen
Which at its bidding flow in form,
In beauty and in seeing face.
This the creative which makes
And then sustains unchanging form,
Which makes Creation rational,
Rejects the lie that Love is not
Or but a fugitive from God,
Fleeing His grim and cruel ways.
The Word gives lie to lie—
Satan's invention of Untruth—
For Word is heard, creation's dawn
Resounds with purpose, function forms
To truth the Truth. Thus flows the Word,
Assuring us that worlds are born
But born to live, and to remain.

When comes the sin then comes the Word
Prophetic in its power, and fire
To purge where dross accumulates,
Pronounce the doom of dusty lies
Prognosticate the coming Word
Whose flesh will live where lie abounds,
Waiting the hour to grasp it firm

And hurry it to doom. Wisdom a-flesh,
 The truth-in-flesh, Incarnate Word,
 Word of the Cross. His little word shall tell
 'Demons depart!' 'You be healed,'
 'Thy sins forgiven!' 'Today you be
 With me in Paradise.'

Word cannot die. Fresh from the grave
 Its finger points to world that comes
 Rolling to sight with wisdom rich
 Encompassing all ignorance
 In power regenerating. Full power
 Blots out the sin and purges works—
 Dead on the burdened heart of man—
 Renewing the mind to innocence
 And second birth and second life.
 Man is the new humanity,
 Wise in the priceless gifts of Christ,
 The Word endowing bankrupt man
 From treasured mines with wisdom fraught
 To meet the ancient needs, fulfil
 The angry heart deprived of love
 With righteousness and peace and joy
 And all love's fruits.

Nor finished is the Word
 With this its fruit.
 See the apocalyptic joy,
 The fierceness of the battle high
 By him who rides astride his horse—
 Charger of royal family—
 Faithful and True he is the Word,

The Word of Judgement and of God,
 Searing with sword the evil powers,
 Quenching their power by his blood.
 Aloft he crushes down the foe
 With Sword of Word—none can gainsay
 The Truth that is the Ultimate.

Oh Wisdom Christ,
 Oh Wisdom Word,
 Oh Sword of Truth,
 Oh Word of Love,
 Oh sea of truth,
 Oh Wisdom pure,
 Establish me in innocence
 That I may know You, True
 Father and Son and Spirit Free.
 I weep, I whisper and I cry
 All of my love to Thee to Thee.

HIGH PULPIT—LOW LECTERN

THERE IS a church in which I occasionally preach. Prior to worship I meet the lay leaders who will conduct the service. This church has a pulpit set in what must be termed ‘the chancel’, since it is raised somewhat higher than the congregational plane. The pulpit is to the left side as the congregation would view it when looking towards it. In the centre, but on the floor level of the congregation, is a lectern. It has all the attributes of the pulpit, but looks less ecclesiastical, and is at one with the people.

One of the lay leaders will ask me, ‘Will you preach from the pulpit or from the lectern?’ and inevitably another lay leader—well known to me—will say, ‘Oh, you’ll preach from the pulpit, of course.’ Knowing his predilection for the pulpit, I always say, ‘Yes, of course— from the pulpit.’

I may call his appreciation of the pulpit ‘a predilection’, but he would say, ‘The lectern is for leading worship, but the pulpit is for preaching.’ Nor would that be all of his thinking. He and I both know that the word ‘lectern’ relates to reading, and in fact the reading of the ‘lections’, the Scriptures set down for the day. This custom goes

back to the days of synagogues when set lections would be read. Originally the lectern was not for preaching.

In other words, my friend is saying, ‘Read the Scriptures from the lectern, but expound them from the pulpit.’ By saying this he may appear to be amongst the mindless traditionalists. Others ask, ‘What does it matter? Preach from wherever you like, even in the aisle and half way to the back, if you wish.’

Now we know that ritualism is scorned in these days of freedom and enlightenment, but if we are thoughtful we will need to admit that we are all ritualists by practice. We go through a ritual in the preparation of a meal, in dressing ourselves, in the modes of travel we use—and so on. Every ritual is significant, and is intended to be so. It is not only a matter of function but also of principle. If a celebrant stands in front of the holy table facing east when leading the service of Holy Communion, then his position shows him to be between the congregation and God. This is called ‘taking the eastern position’. If, however, the holy table is pushed forwards in the chancel and the celebrant ministers from behind it, facing the congregation, he

in a sense—acting as a host or surrogate host to the congregation. This is called ‘the western position’. If he takes ‘the northern position’, i.e. the left side or end of the table, then he is refusing to take a mediatorial stance—as in the eastern position—and also refusing to be host to the congregation—as in the western position. He will undoubtedly have a rationale for his northern position.

When my lay leader friend desires me to preach from the pulpit, he is saying something like this: ‘Maybe I appear to be a mindless traditionalist, but I wish the word of God to be elevated. I wish the proclaimer of that word

to be elevated. I wish to hear an authoritative message, not because the preacher has authority of his own, but authority to preach the word, and authority in preaching the word. Whilst a foot or two in height does not give the preacher any authority—as such—yet it symbolises the authority in which, and by which, he ought to preach.’

For my lay leader friend, preaching from the lectern is tantamount to the preacher saying, ‘My friends of the congregation, I do not put myself above you. What right do I have to do that in a world where all human beings are equal? I recognise your equality with me, and do not give myself out as being superior. I will share with you the word of God rather than proclaim or declaim it. I will appeal to you as people of sense to follow my disquisition, and I am sure that when I conclude you will find much with which to agree. Being human and fallible I may make mistakes, and fall short in true understanding, and I recognise your right to tell me my shortcomings so that I might amend them, and be better for your corrections. Primarily, however, I believe that together we can make headway in this spiritual pilgrimage on which we travel.’

Some preachers would say no such thing. They would think, q want to be as close as I can to my fellow human creatures. If possible I want to look into their eyes, see what they are thinking, and let them have a relationship with me, so that rapport may be possible and helpful both to them and me. Being close I can be more personal, more intimate, and hopefully we will have a good outcome from the encounter.’

Doubtless there are other rationalisations for high pulpit and low lectern. One high-pulpiteer might say, ‘I may lack personal authority, but when I stand in that pulpit

the church—and that includes the congregation—has given me authority to preach, and so I will. I work hard on my sermons, preparing them, and I have a fight to a hearing. Whatever weaknesses I have in life, this podium gives me a special authority, and I intend to take and use it.’

I am sure that the reader who has persisted this far will have his ideas. One set of them will be functional, such as the fact that a person can be heard when he is closer to the congregation; that psychologically nearness to the hearers is a great advantage. Also it will pacify those who dislike any expression of authority, since they confuse ‘authoritative’ with ‘authoritarianism’. Another set of readers will be thinking about the intimacy a preacher can have with his congregation, and how this can influence their reception of his word. Yet others will be thinking in terms of the ritual. Some will thine ‘How can a thoughtful person use such an antiquated bit of furniture as a pulpit?’, and others, ‘What is involved here is not “function” but “principle”. That man symbolises his special position by being above the congregation.’

I know another church in the State in which I live. Its pulpit is without doubt the highest I have seen, and I have preached in many countries of this world. Today the congregation is so small that to stand up in that pulpit means there is a vast space and height between the preacher and his hearers. Even so, that very church was once jam-packed to its doors, and it would have been almost impossible to preach from a lower situation. Perhaps the congregation has mostly determined the height

and position of the pulpit.

In some churches there is no pulpit. The central significant furniture is the Lord's Table, or—as some call 'the altar'. Such arrangements are not by accident. The doctrine and practice of a church determine the customs. In today's climate many churches have opted for architectural changes so that the congregation may sit in circular fashion. Such arrangements are not confined to the end of this twentieth century. Other centuries have known the same functional placing of pulpits and seating settings. The placing of ecclesiastical furniture has always symbolised the mind of the worshippers.

It has been observed that everyone of us has a 'hidden agenda', i.e. we have a certain view and will always work from it when coming to conclusions or making decisions. We probably hear little of what is said if it does not fit our personal agenda. If the reader, then, wishes me to pronounce on what I think is right or wrong, then I have to decline. If he asks me my predilection, then I can be honest and tell him. The matter of being 'right' or 'wrong' is a difficult one to determine, since we all have these hidden agendas, and we are conditioned in life by so many factors.

Our answers should be given in terms of objective categories, i.e. evaluations in which we are not primarily—and emotionally—involved. I doubt whether we have such objective criteria by which we can decisively opt for 'high pulpit' or 'low lectern', and claim we are correct. Pulpits and lecterns have a certain cultural connotation, and it is possible—surely—for one man to speak with true authority from a low lectern, and another to lack authority in a high pulpit, and vice versa. Preachers have

declaimed from graves in a churchyard, from steps and stairs, and from horseback or the rear of a truck. They have proclaimed from balconies, or lying bound in a prison, from sick-beds, or even from a funeral pyre. Preachers have preached from high pulpits in a cathedral and been without effect, whilst illiterate preachers have declaimed in some miserable situation of man, and done so with brilliant effect. Again, cathedral pulpits can be the home of great and godly preachers, whilst illiteracy—of itself—is no guarantee of great power.

Where, then, does that leave us? It leaves us with the need to examine the matter of true authority, especially in regard to preaching and teaching. Mindless persons are sure that the age in which they live is necessarily the best age, that things of the past are 'old-fashioned', and that the 'new' is good simply because it is new. It may, in fact, be the 'old' recycled, or it may just be 'good' because it is functional and attractive. The see-sawing of the human mind is what produces constant change and an endless variety of fashions. Young people often long to revert to what was 'old', since they see in it a stability and security which they think does not obtain today. They may be right, but they could be wrong; every age has its securities and its insecurities. Each matter or fashion would vary from situation to situation.

All of this relates to *authority*. The pity is that the word is so emotive to most of us that we cannot hear what is said about it, or we revert, grimly, to our hidden agendas. For example, if you are a reader who thinks I am out to catch you and get you under authority, then you will react in one way or another to my writing. If you are authoritarian in stance, then you may welcome what I say, even though

I do not support authoritarianism. The matter, however, goes beyond such predilections. We are either ‘for’ authority or ‘against’ it. I put these two words in quotes because I don’t think the matter has to do with ‘for’ or ‘against’. We have already mentioned the fact that ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ are difficult evaluations to obtain, and who is correct in them?

The idea of authority is surely rooted in God. He has created and He is Author, and as Author has the ‘copyright’. The whole creation must be under His authority, which is not to say that all creatures obey Him, but is to say that they ought to—however they may seek to rationalise Him away as an imperfect Creator.

Many recognise the fact of authority and concede the idea that there must be certain people in authority, but they have two difficulties in coming to terms with such authorities. The first difficulty lies in their thinking, for they are saying to themselves, ‘There must be another and better way than this way of authority, since the need for authority is linked with the way people act, and does not spring from some pure (ontological) source.’

Their second line of reasoning is, q will accept the immediate reality of authorities, but since they do not meet my ideas of exercising true authority, and since they are imperfect, then I absolve myself from any obligation to obey them.’ On both these counts authority is rendered null and void. Only expediency will induce a grade of obedience to authorities, and this is commonly known as ‘toeing the line’. It is not ‘obedience from the heart’, which in this world is an extremely rare commodity.

Then of course there are those who are all for authority! They are often timid souls who wish to be

protected—they, their life and their goods, and if possible their way of life—within the security of authority. On the other hand there are those who are not timid, and wish to have authority. They think it is good and essential for others, and they simply like exercising authority. They honestly wish to be top-dogs, or have the joys of ruling over others. Some of these have good rationalisations for authority, such as the goodness of law and order, and the benefits authority bestows on the masses. They represent a variety of people, such as those who revel in lauding it over others, repressing others, keeping others within lawful bounds of living—and so on. On the whole, if honestly assessed they are really ladder-climbers, and use authority as a means of securing themselves in life, and boosting their personal morale, and—as they say today, all too often—their ‘self-image’.

On the score of the ‘timid’ and the ‘bold’, I could be accused of being cynical. I plead not cynicism but realism. In addition to those mentioned above, there are others: those who recognise the validity of true authority, who seek to live within it, and—if authority be given to them—to use it rightly for ‘the good order and conduct’ of humanity.

I am not here entering into the basic question of authority, i.e. as to whether it is ‘ontological’ or of some functional and ‘provisional’ order, but simply recognising the fact that it exists, and that we must come to terms with it. Then I intend to go beyond the debate on authority and insist that the true Authority is God, that His word is as Himself and not to be separated from Him, and comes to man in his human situation with true authority. Here—if not anywhere else—man can, and indeed must,

accept the reality of authority, under pain of having to live in his own order of things, or an order imposed by anarchy on the one hand or authoritarianism on the other. The reader who finds this proposition unacceptable and indigestible, knows what he may do—cease reading! On the other hand, if he has a mind to examine this proposition, then it is possible that a radical change could take place in his thinking. The problem of high pulpit or low lectern can be summarised as follows:

High Pulpiteer. I have no authority. I need one to be given to me. I rest on the ecclesiastical [here substitute academic, professional, artisan, vocational, functional, political—as your case may require—] authority given me. I must be certified and attested by an outward authority, and when that attestation is given me then I insist I be heard, and—where possible—obeyed.

Low Lecterneeer:. I have no given authority as such. Nor do I need it or ask for it. My invitation to speak here is surely assessed on my ability, and on that I stand or fall. I have confidence in my gifts and skills—the matter which I have acquired by practice. I stand before you, then, and ask whether or not you should hear me. My credentials? Am I not my own credentials? Wait, watch, listen and see. I will soon prove to you that in life I am on something good. I stand or fall before you by that which I here accomplish or fail so to do. On these grounds I must be heard, and—where possible—obeyed.

There may well be other variations on these themes, and the location of a high pulpiteer and low lecterneeer does not matter. The two represent certain principles and

can operate reasonably well, whether placed in low lectern or high pulpit. They have a basis from which to work, and this they have always done.

We may ask, ‘Are there alternatives?’ and the answer would have to be, ‘We do not seek for alternatives. We seek for what is basic and true.’ The Roman centurion told Christ, q also am a man under authority, and so I speak with authority, and those under me obey me.’ He meant that he had no authority *of himself*, nor had he acquired the skill of evoking obedience. The Roman Army stood behind him, and he could only do what that Army had determined he should do, *and he did it!* He saw Christ being a person of authority because he (Jesus) was a man under authority, which, of course, he was himself.

The preacher who preaches with true authority neither leans on the exalted position of his pulpit nor the intimate placing of his lectern to declaim the truth or win the favour of his listeners. The truth does not exist because he exists. If he exists it is because of the truth. That is the truth he must proclaim. He is not given the choice of proclaiming *either* the form or the substance. His word will communicate both, and there will seem to be no division between them.

There is a catch, however, in seeking to give this authoritative form of preaching. It may even be called a ‘Catch-22’. If the man preaches prophetically, and is not a mere imparter of information, then the word of God will directly confront the hearer. From time immemorial this has been known as ‘having a go at me’, i.e. ‘this is a loaded message intended to have a crack at me’, and so the hearer will oppose the preacher, and if roused enough will retaliate. If the preacher avoids this prophetic utterance then

the hearer will not react. He may even respond, but his response will be at a lower level than the truth which he ought to have been told. Thus if the preacher preaches prophetically he will rouse opposition, and if he doesn't, though he save his skin he will have lost his authority, and indeed will be a traitor to his vocation.

This problem has been in the world since Cain and Abel. Abel was a prophet, as Jesus told us. Cain was a child of the devil, as John the apostle told us. Cain killed Abel because of his prophetic life and his prophetic word. What Abel should have done was to be intimate, on the same level as his brother, to be persuasive not polemical, to soothe and not polarise. Somewhere—we say it in irony—Abel missed that kind of approach which would have won Cain. The fact is he did not, and the fact is that Abel is commended and Cain is not.

Jesus was realistic when he said, 'They have slain the blood of the prophets from Abel to Zechariah'. He was similarly realistic when he said—and in regard to himself—'it is not possible that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem'. At the heart of that which is called 'religion' is the deepest opposition to its own true tenets. Jeremiah sought not to preach the truth because of the wearying opposition he met, but ultimately he could not desist. He had told the prophets that God's word was like a fire, and when he tried to contain the word within himself without speaking it, he cried, 'There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones'.

What, then, shall we opt for? There are many alternatives, such as friendly lectern chats, fascinating application of the Scriptures so that they become 'relevant', 'practical' and 'contemporary'. There is a way of preaching which is

directed to helping humanity, for God ought to be about 'helping humanity'! This kind of preaching is 'related to where we are today', and since every agency we know is out to help people, surely we—of all people—should be in that kind of operation. We should be socially active, for surely that, also, is what we are all about. Again, we can catch people's attention by our ability in Scripture. Exegesis can be fascinating if we know how to handle it. Exposition can even be popular if we are entertaining enough. With enough artistry and ability we can 'bring Scripture to life'. All this is said, of course, tongue in cheek.

Since we are serious people we will not work only along those lines. We may see certain virtues in the elements we have mentioned and where possible incorporate them, but primarily *we are about communicating the mind of God to the heart of man*. He needs that word, and he needs to respond, not only because he is required, but because there is no other way of life.

The question then arises, 'Cannot we communicate this word without being authoritarian, harsh, aggressive, abrasive and dominating?' Well, of course! Who suggested that we need be any of these things? We may preach the offence of the Cross but we are not called to be offensive. If we preach with tears, then they can respond with joy—and for that matter—peace and love. If the word of God has first had its way in us, then it can have its way in others, but not without pain to us. What is not real to us will never be real to our listeners. Out of the belly—that place of gut-joy, gut-love, gut-fear and gut-suffering—burst the rivers of living water.

There is one other thing. We are the men and women

of the 'laid back' generation, or perhaps, many of us, the children of that generation. It was an interesting generation. It was the age of the people of 'flower-power', of gentle persuasion that a new age had come to visit us. It was—and is—an age of sensibility, and the time of 'love-ins', 'think-tanks', and the like. Curiously enough, it has also been the age when basic morality has been liquidated, or shown to be irrelevant. The sex revolution has liberated men and women from the old chains of bondage. The family as such is a bygone cult, and the rise in the individual's value has come to stay. All of this has been achieved for the most part cheerfully. The vast unreported suffering from drugs, shattered relationships, and millions of virtually orphaned children, does not seem to matter. The quiet revolution was going to cost us something, anyway!

The Christian side of all this was expressed in 'the Jesus people'. These, too, were gentle people on the whole. They were raised on a mix of good theology and revolutionary thinking. For some, Marx could be combined with Jesus Christ. It was the day of the dialectic. It was the day of new thinking, and almost anything could be combined in a new and cheerful syncretism. It was the day of the gentle people. It was the beginning of the 'laid back people for Christ'.

Some of these had been 'swingers for Christ'. Most were people of thoughtful minds, people of intellect. But they were gentle. Perhaps their parents didn't always see them this way, but then their parents were of another generation, traditional and not liberated. How could they understand the new values? So began a new generation of prophets. For the most part they had feeling for the lost, the downcast, the downtrodden, and the deviates. These

needed saving, even beyond those who were not 'of the street', but were 'straights'. Everything seemed to matter for 'the streets' and little for 'the straights', though all were humans.

So began the new preaching. Nothing from high pulpits and a little bit of disdain for low lecterns. A chart or two hung on the lecterns might give them a bit of life. Music mostly was the vehicle of the new truth. In all this laid back enthusiasm was a place for the truth. It was told gently but earnestly. A new tolerance was called for—a thoughtful understanding for sinners. Christ—in many cases—was unconsciously shown as the Son of Joy, pacifying the Father of dark judgement.

Much theological weakness was there, but many triumphed over it. Many had been liberated from the emptiness of sexual slavery, the bondage of drugs, the deadliness of a life lived out in an esoteric no man's land. Some broke into real joy and the old truth came alive to be new. All of this was—and is—good. It (i.e. this message) can be said equally from high pulpit or low lectern, because it is the true word.

Yet the generation change was not without loss. Older people felt guilty for being old; traditional persons for being traditional. Some of the old aped the young, and somewhere both pulpit and lectern underwent a change. The new prophets can preach with a soothing we have not known in many years, but then, are they uttering the true word of God? We wish so, but we must watch whether or not this is so. Nothing young is right per se, and nothing old wise per se. It has not to do with generation as such. It has to do with God.

If we seek to be calm and reassuring, giving the *form* of

the Scriptures yet not really declaiming them, then we might be deluding ourselves into thinking we are fully proclaiming the Gospel. What might be happening, however, is that we may seek—even unconsciously—to woo people to ourselves, to get them to know what we know, and so do what we do. We may give them the word and expect them to be moved by it to true thought and true action. We may not wish to confront them, to make them decide one way or the other. We may want peace, and we may think the way of peace is to leave men and women to themselves to respond to our calm word. But preaching is more than that, and the truth is a demand to be obedient and to do the word of the Lord, and not only hear it.

Yes, it may seem good to be calm and reassuring, to be peaceful and ‘laid back’—without declaiming—and so to think we are preaching the true form of the word, but we could unwittingly be the untrue prophets. If we show them by the things we do, and the gifts we have, and the skills we can display that our preaching is true, then we may be far from the word of God. We might even be preaching the word of man, yet thinking it to be the word of God. If the measure of a man is to be his *charisma*, then we must remember that evil men have been famous for such *charisma*. If the vitality of the preacher is to be the stimulus to action for his congregation, then we must remember that many have been stimulated only to fall back into lethargy. We must test the spirits of all—without prejudice.

Having said all we have in the paragraphs above, there is a way of preaching which may seem to be ‘laid back’ but which is not. It, too, is quiet. It is gracious. The preacher rarely if ever raises his voice. He may seem almost too

calm. He teaches with assurance, even with gentleness. It is not a fired preaching, and though the voice for the most part is one even in tenor, yet it is not monotonous but is—in fact—quietly and powerfully gripping. In it there is no compromise, no failure to confront the hearers with the plain truth. A man such as Charles Haddon Spurgeon could declaim gloriously with his silver voice, and his oratory moved many. No less the greatest English preacher of all times—George Whitefield. These men could move multitudes, yet no less in effect was a person such as Jonathan Edwards, who actually read the manuscript of his sermon, holding it closely to himself so that he could see it. On one occasion as he preached in this manner, people cried out in terror, some feeling themselves slipping down into hell.

We need, then, to distinguish between ‘laid back’ and ‘quietly authoritative’. When we recognise that ‘laid back’ is not a phenomenon of our age, but has always been a characteristic of those who quietly—but cleverly—escape authority, or the responsibility of authority given, then we will understand it is a form of passive disobedience. We must learn to distinguish between the two, i.e. ‘laid back’ and ‘quietly authoritative’, and this refers to both speaker and listener alike. Many of Jesus’ hearers accused him of histrionics, whilst others just quietly ignored what he had said, even though it was truth from the very Witness to all truth—himself, Jesus the Son of God.

The test of true preaching is whether a man really knows God. He may have brilliant concepts of God, and indeed so brilliant that they move him to emotions and to tears, but they are still concepts. To express emotion along with a concept, or to cause an image to glow—as it were—

is the gift of certain preachers, but it is not necessarily preaching God as Father, or as Son, by means of the blessed Holy Spirit. The man who truly preaches must be one who knows God, and not just about Him, who so lives in His love that the truth and reality of that relationship colours all that he says, and emanates from him as 'a fragrance of life unto life'. Indeed God must be his whole life, his first love and his end love. Otherwise he will communicate less than the glory of the Gospel.

The only test we have is whether or not it be the word of God. Men can simulate the dynamic of the Spirit, and the best can preach with the tongues of men and of angels, but only he who has dwelt with the Most High, and been much to His sanctuary, can come to the people with the dew of God upon him. This being with God is no mystical exercise. It is often with much anguish and many tears, even with much wrestling with God, that a preacher can win, and bring the word of life to his people.

The test of all, then, is the holy love of God. A man must be immersed in this before he preach it. He must live with life, in God's love and not primarily in his love for God, for this second follows the first. God takes the initiative in love and then His servants love Him. When they do this, they do so not because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. When the people of God become the people of God's love, then the pulpit will know greater power. Thus holy love is the test, and if we would broaden this view of love then it would be in the sight of the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are a formidable harvest in the sight of evil powers, but a joyous array in the sight of the faithful. These alone

capture the human heart, for they are not skills, or human techniques or calculated operations, but the very flow of the life of God into and through His true proclaimers and preachers.

So whether circumstances force or call us to use high pulpits or low lecterns, whether we preach in a church building or in the market-place, or yet again whether our pulpit or lectern be the chair at home, the aisle of the supermarket, or the bench in the factory, does not matter. The authority of the high pulpit can be expressed even in the low lectern, and the warm intimacy God gives to His prophets and preachers can emanate with power from high pulpits.

The real question is whether we will deliver the word given to us by God, or seek to devise our own word, and preach in our own way.

The Building Love

I saw in the night and in the day
 Little people.
 They were not young nor grown old,
 They were simply small.

I wanted them to grow tall;
 Not taller than tall
 But to the true height
 I knew they were less than becoming.

So I prayed for them;
 In the night and the day I asked
 That they become true people,
 Taller and noble and bold.

I saw then the change;
 With my love they transformed,
 Eyes bright, heads alert
 And drawing dreams down with hands outstretched.

I went on my way with tears,
 Moist eye pearls for prayer and people.
 I was filled with high gratitude
 And resolved for more prayer in the night and day.

The Filling Love

When I saw them all empty,
 Bereft of their own true humanity,
 I wished in the purple evening—
 As in the golden dawn—
 That they would become filled,
 If possible with God.

Some did: they were no more wraiths,
 They were more like God than anything,
 But mostly they were truly human
 Which is a full thing, not an occupation
 For absent-minded wraiths
 Or for drained mortals.
 I tell you they were like God
 And yet they were truly human.

POSTE RESTANTE

Essay on an Unknown Stirrer

In my dreams I keep getting this letter. In fact it is not a whole letter. More a fragment, you might say. It has an overseas stamp on it, which I suppose is French, but I do not know. Anyway, it has these wavy lines of the franking mark, and I have to take it that it is real, although I seem to see it in a dream.

Now I don't mind the letter coming, but in a way it is very disturbing. That is why I am writing this account; because I am disturbed. I can take a shaking up as good as the next, but sometimes I wish I could get a different dream. To tell the truth, I do get different dreams—many of them—but this one keeps coming, and I ask myself, 'Why? Why should I continually be disturbed?' You see, this particular dream puts me into a different bracket of life and thought. It keeps putting me in another bracket, so to speak.

I must be honest and say that I understand this. It is not as though it is a new thing. It is, in some sense, an old thing. I recognise that this dimension which comes

through to me from *Poste Restante* is one in which I have been since I was a small boy. It tells me of a world which I lose when I just live the way we do in this 'lucky country'. I'll explain that in a minute, but first let me tell you that I am a normal citizen. I only once ever went to a shrink, and that was years ago, just after I came back from the War.

The Rehabilitation or Repatriation Department sent me to a shrink because of some of my actions. They seemed queer to one of the bland men in the Department. He had heard that I had returned some subsistence allowance because I had been recalled, from several weeks' leave, to the hospital. It seemed quite strange to him that I should try to return my unexpended subsistence money. Indeed, it also seemed strange to the lowest clerk to whom I offered it. He was a private. He called the corporal who called the sergeant who called the first lieutenant who called the captain. The major, when he was called, thought I was having him on. When he realised I wasn't, he quickly withdrew from the whole thing. He actually pleaded with me.

'Son, please go away. Go back to your ward. Please keep the subsistence without any guilt. We don't have any procedure for taking it back.'

It was the pain in his eyes—or was it fear?—that made me go away. However, they noted it for the Department, and that was the first thing.

The second thing that disturbed my psychiatrist friend was my application for vocational training. Before the War I was in one vocation and now I was asking for help in another. Asking for help was OK, but I had to have the same vocation. The fussy clerk was insistent: I could not change my vocation and expect monetary help. I

pointed out that my mind had changed in a war, and also in a prison camp of that war. Looking back, I can see this little fellow was quite small-minded, and a bit position-proud; power-proud, you might say. Also I was very honest and something of a perfectionist—almost to stem pride. I told him what he could do with his job, and began to walk off. Then he was quite amazed. He had first figured that I was being very cunning and that no one could con him. No, sir! No one could con him. When it dawned on him that I was genuine, he began to climb down, but I wasn't having anything. He told me how I could manage it—the new vocational training—provided I wasn't too straight with my answer, provided I told some small white lies. When I shook my head he began to be really insecure. Then he almost pleaded. I would be exaggerating to say he was in tears, but I knew he couldn't cope with my everyday good and earthy honesty. He passed my irrational action on to the Department, and so they sent me to the shrink. That was many years ago, and I have not been near one since.

The shrink, by the way, enjoyed it hugely. We talked our heads off, so to speak. I had learned a lot through that war and that prison camp, and he listened. He said he got amazing insights, which gratified me. Anyway, we left the best of friends. He chuckled, and said, 'I am wondering just who interviewed who!' He was still chuckling as we parted. I only tell you this so that you will not think I am a case for the shrink.

I will explain what happens when I get this Poste Restante fragment. Suddenly I am reminded that there is another

world to the one in which I generally live. Mind you, in a sense it is not just the world overseas. It can be—indeed is—here in this country also. So the matter is not merely geographical. It is simply the world of reality where people are not merely mindless. I know that is hard to explain unless you have been in that dimension, or suddenly, one day, get confronted with it. Those nights when the letter comes with its wavy franked stamp marks, then I know it, and in a way its coming is a sort of rebuke to me not to be mindless. I don't think I mind that so much, but what is written in the letters is authentic, whereas some letters are pretty bland and pointless. You will have had hundreds— if not thousands—of polite, pointless, or puerile letters. They major on minors and minor on majors, as the old saying used to be. These Poste *Restante* things are in some ways ordinary enough letters, and far from preachy or moralistic. It is just that below (or with) the words there is this other dimension, this different quality of life and thinking.

Let me give you an example. If you have travelled, like I do from time to time, to countries where there is an enormous amount of suffering, then you begin to catch some kind of a thing from that suffering. People who suffer may be as mindless as most of us who rarely if ever suffer, or who maybe suffer from our own foolishness. Say, for example, you have never starved; then starving may unlock doors for you, and you will look out on to new ideas, new vistas. By this I do not mean that stuff about everything in this world being but shadows cast by the true world. I have never been able to swallow that thing of Plato about the cave. No way! I am sure we see reality anywhere—if we *will!* Starving or some other

suffering will make you see reality—if you will.

Travel in that sense is good, and, as they say, ‘neat’ and ‘cool’. But not necessarily so. To me, some of the most mindless people in all the world are tourists, especially the camera-carrying ones. They seem to imagine they can catch the world in their cameras, and the more expensive that little device, the more the world is caught. You can feel really sad for a tourist. He is wholly kidding himself. He won’t just let beauty be itself, and magnificence be breathtaking. He has to tame it with the camera to his own domestic level. Now when I say that word ‘domestic’, I believe I have caught their mindlessness in a simple word. Of course, real domesticity is a very wonderful thing, simple and powerful, but I use the word in another sense to, cover all that is bland and banal. People miss the reality because they see it through mindless eyes. That is why pot-bellied men in shorts, with crazy hats and caps and touristy shirts, think they are really living it up, when—for the most part—they are sadly pathetic; bless them!

Now I am no better than the tourist, except that what I do I know is pointless. They think their touristy actions to be a big deal. They are actually piling up hundreds of colour transparencies via their avid cameras. Their non-malignant minds are actually scheming slide-evenings. They are going to force friends—after the barbecue and the drinks—to look at their transparencies, which in themselves are not all that bad, but with a rolling commentary can be hell! Anyway, you know the sort of thing I mean, and you will have grasped my point, namely that we can be morons although well educated, and bores although we have reasonable I.Q’s. It is not a matter of

human brilliance, but a matter of the dimension in which you choose to live, and I mean *choose* to live. Deep down, we make our choices. They are never forced on us.

When I was a kid I was certainly a bit of a dreamer, although I never had—so to speak—a *Poste Restante* motif dream. I used to dream during the day. I used to have visions that out there, somewhere, was life which was real. I was sure there was meaning to life, and I was idealistic as young kids are, but then I actually felt called to go on pilgrimage and find the Holy Grail, or reality, or whatever other term was then available. I just couldn’t accept that what people were doing was wholly reality, or—as you might say—truth. Let me explain.

In the suburb of our southern city in which I lived, there were the most beautiful homes a person could imagine or not imagine. They were superb. Set in the loveliest of bushland garden settings, they were tasteful and mind-stirring. True, they had high walls, but you could look through the open gates and see the sweep of drives and lawns. They represented another world to me, and one in which was little suffering, certainly none from poverty. I used to wonder why they made me feel uneasy. I admired whilst I looked, but then I would become uneasy. Leaving aside things like snobbishness and high-mindedness, I felt there was something else which was wrong. In later years it flashed on me that there was enormous selfishness in the whole thing. These meticulous homes and gardens were just for a few, just for a family. The world was shut out. If—in a moderate way— it had been invited in, then the whole matter would have seemed different. I suppose this is what may be called ‘selfish domesticity’.

By now you will be thinking, 'This person is a compulsive utopian, a radical reformer, an impossible idealist.' Please do not think that. I see the same mindless domesticity, in homes of the middle-classes and the poor. I also recognise that there are homes into which the world is invited, so to speak. Generous people are sharing their goodies with others. These are not snobs, misers, or even show-offs.

'So,' you will say, 'what are you getting at?' That is a good question, for it brings me back to my *Poste Restante*. ' theme, yet because we live in the 'lucky country' it may be difficult for you to grasp my meaning. I will again try to explain.

If I have been living banally in a certain day, i.e. have simply worked at my job, have regaled my mind with anticipation of social intercourse, good food and drink, good companionship in the family, a reasonable use of the TV and the video machine, and have supped well before going to bed, I have this strange revulsion to domestic trivia when I put my head on the pillow. If I say nothing to my wise wife, and settle into needed sleep, then that is life to me. It will certainly include the problems of the children, and even their children's problems, but I duck much of that with a philosophical, 'She'll be jake, mate. No sweat. It'll all turn out orright. No use wasting good sleep over things which are just a matter of fact.' If then I can sleep that way, I am in the non-*Poste Restante* syndrome. I am concerned to live. I seek for security: emotional, environmental, circumstantial and economic. This kind of security is sweet to the mind. It brings a certain amount of satisfaction. In fact, it is life as we had hoped it might be. Now for me the strange thing is that I can get as doped in

this way as the rest of us. I watch the news, determining that I will then do something useful. I have an image in my mind for what is useful. After the news there is a preview of the film of the evening, and I relax. I know my idealistic intensity of nature and realize that it is unrealistic and quite legalistic, and I want the grace of life. So I watch the film, especially one which deals with retribution and justice. I have had my own experiences of human injustice, and I appreciate the wailing sirens and blue lights flashing which conclude the show. I also like the stirring of the adrenalin and the calming cup of beverage. My mind is now occupied. I have many thoughts: I am thinking. I am no longer mindless.

What goes in must come out, or it must influence us; and all that sort of thing. This may be my lucky night or unlucky night—it all depends how you see it My boyhood and youth-hood person seems to be betrayed, and I try to make up to it—but in vain. I am spared nothing. Do I then, in fact, write (in my dreams) these *Poste Restante* letters to myself?. The answer may be 'Yes', but then there are days when I get letters of the same nature and quality from actual persons. I recognise the mood and the dimension very quickly. That day I see the banality of our living, the selfishness of our endeavours, the mindlessness of our actions, and the futility of our doings. These will be days of high guilt, and why not? Guilt is a healthy sign. It is a sign that conscience lives. It is an indicator to the truth that somehow there is more to life than banality and blandness.

I realize that this sounds like the worst kind of preaching, the heaviest form of moralism, but I am sure we have invented those two words 'preaching' and 'moralism' to

justify ourselves in our emptiness. The wise old preacher who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes had analysed the whole empty situation which men call 'life', and he named it 'vanity' or 'grasping after wind'. He knew what emptiness was about. He had lived in one of those big homes, had been successful in sport, sex, business and commerce, and also in politics; but it tasted—in the ultimate—like straw in the mouth.

You may be thinking, 'This fellow has delivered his message. He has effected his little catharsis of guilt, and now he will be at peace. We all do a bit of that. It helps us to go back to the goodies and the special security, and to come to realistic terms with life.' This bit of clever rationalisation is in fact not very astute. It does nothing lasting. It only assists us along the path of futility and banality. It encourages us to join and be one with the mindless ones. It makes us into clever zombies and thoughtless morons—given in that we are still intellectually apt. So then, I am glad of these fragments which come to me on odd nights and stir me. I am glad these gifts still flow towards me. Someone is writing to me out of reality, and confronting me with truth. I see the dangers of domestic trivia, but even that is not enough.

I must become fully *Poste Restante*. To be a critic of the bland and futile is only to be a critic of myself. Something positive is needed, such as becoming real again, returning to true humanness. Any humanist will agree with me on that, but what the humanist will not agree with is that I cannot do this alone. I must plunge into the world of reality and live within it. It is not merely a case of shaking my head. It is a case of responding to what is there—outside of me, so to speak—and that becoming part of me.

Now nothing will cause me to do that but an act of grace which will stir me in my sluggishness and liberate me from it. My supine self must be shaken to its foundations, and no action of my own will can do this. Wills just do not work that way. My wise wife—when she was wise but not my wife—shook me to the foundations, but in such a way as to capture me. Every so often she can be as devastating. One look from her tells me what a slob I am in my imagined wealth and security. She is no idealist; neither is she a feminine slob. She is mindful, one of the *Poste Restante* people.

How come the little boy can just about be overwhelmed by the grown man? Is not the child the father of the man? How come the young man can be stifled by the supine adult? How can the benefits of a war experience and thoughtful time in a prison camp be dulled down to mediocrity? Can the living person become a tourist of this world and its wonders? It appears to be so. Yet those fragments of letters which bring with them the fragrance of a different dimension—who is it who sends them to a man in his sleep; who writes them? Why should some person or persons, somewhere, persist in their endeavours to wake us from the sleep of death?

These are questions I dwell on with great seriousness. They relieve me of thinking that our journey from the cradle to the grave is necessarily pointless, and has to be bland and mindless. In fact, these questions have awakened me, I believe, once for all to live life wholly. Whilst I do not despise the goodies that keep coming to us, and the security of relationships with those who are mindful, yet I am convinced that life with goal and purpose—based on the true nature of all created things—

is the only purposeful way to live. At the risk of being thought preachy, I now state categorically that the bland form of life is death, and the awakened and seemingly dangerous way of life is alone the true way of living. We may differ as to its exact modes and some of the ways of living in it, but there can be no doubt—for me at least— that *Poste Restante* confrontations are authentic, and that the life they urge men to is the only authentic life. The intuitions of childhood are not foolish. They are indeed simple but high wisdom. Only the childlike can enter the true kingdom.

I am grateful then for them all: the disturbing dreams, the fragments of letters, and even for the franked postmark. It does not even matter much that I cannot read the name of the originating post office. It is enough that I have been stirred and renewed. Without this renewal, my sleep would be supine, and my supineness death.

The Power of the Holy

There—in the celestial places—they speak,
They sing—yes, they shout, they cry
In never-ending praise and awe
The wonder of His holiness. This is their joy:
That the Eternal is holy, that His holiness
Is eternal.

The seraphim cried in the presence of the prophet,
Even for the prophet they cried
'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts!'
Yet not merely for the prophet
Or the prophet's posterity,
But because He is holy.
Who then can withhold this message?
Who can contain such praise?

The blessed are the pure in heart.
Purity is blessing in itself.
Who then is holy as He is holy?
Who then knows the power,
The Power that consumes impurity,
Destroying the stultifying pollution,
Setting the heart free for joy?

His was the powerful family,
 Fearsome to all evil, traumatic to impurity,
 The ascension of that Cross was not mere
 Condescension. It was the deliberate act,
 The unchanging intention to destroy
 That which would destroy the true essence
 Of the created universe.

There is no place—not in all creation—
 Where impurity may hide. It seeks
 To inhabit the human heart, to lurk
 In the secret and the hidden places,
 There to breed, to compound itself
 In monstrous forms. It cannot be
 Hell is invaded by holiness.
 The high Cross seeks out the low evil,
 Tracing it to its lair and there Destroying it.

This is the love, the love of the Most High,
 The eminent and pre-eminent holiness
 That sets the entire creation free.
 There, in the strong white conscience,
 The pure heart of the Son, Son of the Holy One,
 Death destroys the passion of impurity,
 Liberating man.

MAN AND HIS HOLINESS

The Internal Struggle for and against Personal Holiness

WHAT IS it in the human spirit which longs for holiness, for the sense of being pure, and which desires both cleansing and cleanness? What is it that is at once repelled by the thought of holiness, and yet—at the same time—is gripped by it? The answer must be that man is made for holiness —and who would not know that? Who has never felt yearnings towards purity or not had deep regrets for lost purity? The other aspect—the rejection of holiness— must mean that something in us spurs us on to—even whilst dreading—the experience of holiness.

Truthwise the Christian person knows that he must be holy, for uncleanness is lethal. Flashes of the truth keep breaking in on the thoughtful mind: ‘Holiness... without which no one shall see the Lord’; ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they [only] shall see God’. The Holy City is to be holy and remain holy, and holy ones shall live in it, delight in it, and even revel in it, ‘But nothing unclean shall enter

it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life'. There is a punctuated time when how and what a person is will remain fixed for ever: 'Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy', for that is the time of judgement, 'But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death'.

This must mean, then, that man by creation was intended to be a holy creature, i.e. a pure person. In his rebellion against God, and in his drive for personal independence of the Creator, he defiled himself. The innocent creature became a person possessed with his own brand of knowledge, i.e. knowledge of good and evil, which was in fact no true knowledge. Becoming a person of his own wisdom, and joining a system of anti-God wisdom, he entered into, and became a member of, a system hostile to God. That hostility and that identification with evil must mean that man is doomed. Much as we find the thought distasteful, man has brought himself under judgement for his uncleanness. He cannot just opt for evil and ignore the truth that his Creator destroys evil, and man—if he is one with that evil—must also perish. That story we will not much ponder here. All we know is that the pure primal creatures became intellectually sophisticated, but morally depraved, and that has brought unease to the human heart. Somewhere, deep down, impurity will not let a person be at peace.

That was what the prophet meant when he said, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately cor-

rupt'. He then asked a question and answered it in the same breath: 'Who can understand it?', that is, the human heart. His answer was that only God could understand the human heart, and that in fact He keeps testing every human heart. The ancient writer of Genesis also described man's impurity. He said, 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. Following the Flood a similar assessment was made: 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth'.

The question is: 'Does man simply revel in his impurity, and is he single-minded in the pursuit of unholiness, or does he have—even if only from time to time—yearnings for purity? Does he really have an internal struggle for holiness?'

THE IMPURE STRUGGLE FOR HOLINESS

Asking whether man sometimes desires holiness is like asking whether a man would ever desire a bath or a hot shower, whether he would—or would not—wish to feel clean. Of course human beings desire cleanliness. Mere observation shows us that. Whilst it is true that in some Eastern religions to be naked, long-haired, and to accumulate filth habitually is looked upon as a sign of holiness, yet surely this is perverted humility. To be holy by being unholy, clean by being impure—that is a strange contradiction. Of course the devotee takes on outward pollution in order to attain inner purity, so the drive for purity is there, however strange the reasoning behind it.

We know enough of dualistic religion and philosophies to know that these religious devotees spurn what is bodily and material as evil, insisting that the pure spirit is triumphant over all that is material. Outward filth, then, is the devotee's triumph of purity. Whatever we may think of such reasoning, the fact is that there is a drive for holiness.

Then there is the universal drive of human beings for self-justification. What is this but a desire to free the mind from guilt and from the sense of failure and inferiority which dogs the human race. Some express this drive in religious ways, others in proving themselves by success and achievement. Rivalry is intense in the human race as we seek to prove ourselves before others. This drive must be taken to mean that human beings realize their lack and seek to assure themselves and others that they can still be acceptable as human creatures.

The humanist insists that God is not necessary for such achievement, and that man has these powers and capacities within himself. The religionist may seek God's aid from time to time, but essentially he, too, is humanistic. The moralist believes he can carry out the essential moral laws, and—whenever he fails to do so—has to rationalise his failures along certain lines. For the rest—poets dream, writers have ideals, and artists depict those states which express their vision of reality. Utopians and messianic reformers would drive the human race to their own goals of perfection.

In spite of all these endeavours—religious, moralistic, artistic and ideological—man remains much the same at heart. He is impure but feels himself goaded to purity, or has his rich dreams of some desirable unpolluted state.

GOD'S ALTAR FOR MAN'S IMPURITY

Man, left to himself, can never achieve purity. His heart—and a thousand other things—may assure him he can become holy, but the temptation to use his body, mind and spirit for his own advancement, pleasure and satisfaction, soon makes him prey to his five senses and his ego-seeking drives. Even so, he often has anger against a system which makes him a slave to himself and other powers which inhabit this universe. He generally rationalises his state as one of being victimised. Consciously or unconsciously he blames God. God should know better and do better—for him! Often, angrily, he blasts God out of existence. He becomes suspicious of man, and finally, cynical of all things—himself excepted.

Nevertheless the drive or desire is there to be whole, to be strong, to be pure. Where, then, shall he seek to find, ask to receive, and knock to have the door to life opened? He is set upon the path to perfection, and tries many doors. Only if he is illusioned will any door seem to open to bring him into liberation and wholeness. The one door—God's door of grace and love—is so despised as to have few knocking upon it, yet how could purity come out of a mind so humanly oriented, as is man's? What guru within time can tightly speak of eternal matters, but by his own limited reasoning, and driven by his own drive for perfection? Such gurus cannot have the answer.

A HOLY FOUNTAIN

Men may dream of a fountain which could bring them to purity. Some cultures have religious rites, washings and

Illustrations which give an immediate sensual experience of cleansing, and are a sign or sacrament of an inner cleansing. Always such sacramental acts are short-lived in their effects. Washing demands more washing. Likewise with moral washings, i.e. those religious acts which temporarily dull the conscience of human guilt. Expiation has a way of compounding its own self-drive. The devotee one day comes to see that there is *no fountain for cleansing*, not, anyway, in his particular form of devotion.

God said to Israel, 'On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness'. Through a former prophet He had said, similarly, 'And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, every one who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst, by a spirit of judgement and a spirit of burning'. By yet another prophet He had said, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you'. To this He had added, 'A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you'.

Put all those predictions together and they amount to a strange and wonderful promise for the purification of human beings, even if they seem directed only to the people of Israel. Whilst they were first to those of Israel, we shall see they were for all mankind.

THE FOUNTAIN AND THE ALTAR ARE ONE

Jesus said, 'The altar makes the gift sacred', or, 'the altar sanctifies the gift'. What he was saying was, 'Do not rate

the gift which is placed on the altar above the altar itself, seeing the altar is what makes the gift holy', i.e. he meant the altar was dynamically holy, and this because it represented the God of Israel Himself, particularly in His saving holiness.

Under the instructions of the law for the building and sanctifying of the altar, meticulous details were given. These need not concern us, but what concerns us is that the altar was not to be used until it was seen to be holy in the eyes of the worshippers. First the priestly caste—the sons of Aaron—had to be sanctified, and in turn they were to offer the sacrifice of a bull, daily, for seven days—the number of perfection, completeness and wholeness. Atonement was to be made for the altar in this way, and then the anointing of it—with oil—was to take place. It could now be said to be holy. Roughly speaking, blood and oil signified life and spirit, so that at great cost the altar was made pure.

In all religions the altar is important. It is here that the devotee places his trust His guilt-haunted spirit cries out to the deity or spirit which inhabits his altar. He speaks for peace in his soul. He must have an altar—whatever. He must have a saving deity or spirit—whatever. Where possible he must have the mystical power of shed blood. His conscience demands no less.

In the Scriptures the altar is depicted in wonderful form. It is efficient to the cleansing of all sin. That was what the Hebrews were promised, and they believed it. The more sensitive saw God's heart as the true altar and His love blazing fiercely in sacrificial mercy for His elect people—redeeming them. The altar—of itself—could do nothing. It was because God was present at it that it became effective. The blood of bulls and goats could in

fact accomplish nothing—of themselves—but the dramatic and tragic outpouring of the life of the animal victims was a sacrament of a life yet to be outpoured in the centre of history, and this life was to make atonement for human sins, for it was to make atonement by reason of the life, for ‘the life of the flesh is in the blood’. Anyone who has seen his own blood flowing away from his body without it being stopped will know the dramatic fact that that blood is his life; his life is in the blood.

So by the dramatic letting of the blood of bulls did Israel recognise how holy was the altar, and so holy that it became central to their thinking, central to their sacrifices, and central to their living, for had not God said, ‘There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar’? In AD 70 Titus, Emperor of Rome, decimated the temple at Jerusalem and destroyed the altar, and from that time there has been no material altar at the heart of the people called ‘the Jews’.

THE HOLY ALTAR OF ALL TIME

In the Books of the law of Israel we have seen that the altar had to be consecrated. When Israel was sent into exile and later returned, the altar was renewed. The prophet Ezekiel saw further into the future even than the second temple. He wrote down a screed of direction for the consecration of the new great altar:

‘For seven days you shall provide daily a goat for a sin offering; also a bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be provided. Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and

purify it, and so consecrate it. And when they have completed these days, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, says the Lord God.’

What, then, will be this temple, and its altar? Will it be a material one, rebuilt in Jerusalem, or will it be a spiritual one—a holy temple coveting all the earth, yet having at its heart the true Altar, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? Scholars and devoted students debate this, but the truth is that the only true and effective Altar is that of Jesus Christ himself. Whatever we may have learned of altars in time and human experience, Calvary is the true Altar. At Golgotha—the place of a skull—the one true and efficacious sacrifice was made, and this for all men for all time.

Before he went to the Cross, in what has been called his ‘high-priestly prayer’, Jesus said these words, ‘Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth... And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth’. In what sense could Jesus say he was consecrating himself? He was already without sin; he was already holy. There was no point at which he could be sanctified since he was already that. Yes, but there was a moment—this moment—when he could declare the utter holiness of his sacrifice and the altar upon which he was to be offered, so that both sacrifice and altar would be effective to make holy his followers for whom—even at this moment—he was praying.

The Cross, then, became the holy Altar of all time, and the offering of himself the tone full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world’. To this the writer of Hebrews adds, ‘And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of

the body of Jesus Christ, once for all... when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God... For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified’.

The Cross, then, has become the eternal Altar of the eternal Gospel, and the only altar that is effective for man.

CHRIST’S SANCTIFYING ACTION ON HIS ALTAR OF HOLINESS

To the religious person the Cross has always been a scandal, and to the intellectual thinker so much foolishness. For the believer it is the power of God. Christ did not simply endure hours of physical suffering. Pinned against the timbers of Golgotha, he worked in great moral, spiritual and holy power. His conscience was of such sheer purity that it could take into itself the entire sins of evil man. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was lifted up as a snake—the most venomous and reactionary of creatures. The whole body of Adamic humanity was crucified with him. He bore their sins in his own body on the tree. God made him to be sin for us. In this way he became the effective propitiatory sacrifice, and indeed the only one of all time.

His hours on the Cross were not simply time to be endured as a stint, but time to be used to destroy evil. All that touched that Altar was made holy. God’s holiness destroys evil. The Altar sanctifies the gift All that is upon that Altar—Messiah himself—is holy, but all that he takes up in himself on to that Altar—the evil of humanity —is purified by that place of sacrifice, and that sacrifice

himself. When the apostle Paul cried, ‘I have been crucified with Christ’, he was confessing the intimate personal nature of that sacrifice of the Cross. Most personally, most intimately, and most dreadfully he was taken into the fiery furnace of eternal Holiness and made to be purged of his evil.

‘When he had made purification for sins . . .’ Thus the writer of Hebrews describes the act of the Cross—the sanctifying power of the Altar. He proclaims the mystery but does not explain it. In insisting that the blood of bulls and goats cannot wash away sins—for sins are a moral matter and the life of animals is no true sacrifice for the vast evil of man—he concludes, ‘But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’.

What we have to understand is that that Altar is there for ever. It has proved itself as the only remedy for the evil of man, the only way of bringing a human being to holiness, the only bastion against the depraved forces of evil, the only place of pure peace for the conscience of man, and the only source and fountain of joy for the human race.

THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF THE ALTAR

When it is clear to us that the Cross is the Altar but that the Altar is also Christ himself—at once both Victim and Sanctifier, because it is God who is present—then we see that this Altar effects two things: (i) the primary act of purification in the conscience of a person, so cleansing his heart, setting his memory free from former guilt and

accusation, and motivating him to pure living, and (ii) a constant act of sanctification, i.e. 'the altar sanctifies the gift', that is, it is going on sanctifying the gift. 'Whatever touches the altar shall become holy', was the word of the law. It is clear then that no man can either become holy or go on being holy apart from the Altar—the Cross of Christ.

When we look particularly at the matter of holiness, we see that before the foundation of the world God chose His elect in Christ 'that they should be holy and blameless before him'. Such unblemished holiness could not arise from man, and must be of God. The elect people are corporately cleansed 'by the washing of water with the word'. This is done 'that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish'. This is how we see the holy Bride at the end of the time, and her pure wedding garment is made of 'the righteous deeds of the saints'.

Peter the apostle wrote of the elect as 'chosen and predestined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood'. He means: 'Before time God planned His elect, and before time sanctified them by the Holy Spirit. This was with a view to His elect obeying the Gospel and so being purified by the blood of Christ.' In the same tone Paul said, 'But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved [elected] by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth'.

The true people of God are first elected to redemption, and as such are 'washed, sanctified and justified', in that

order. First comes purification—the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit—then sanctification, i.e. the inclusion in the true people of God, and finally justification, which is God's declaration of a man's righteousness in the face of his guilt and breaking of the law. Doubtless the three elements of washing, sanctification and justification come simultaneously. The washed, sanctified and justified man thus lives in liberty.

THE WAYS OF PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION

'The altar sanctifies the gift.' 'That which touches the altar becomes holy.' He who comes to Calvary is purified and sanctified. He is thus obligated—as empowered—to live a holy life. The power of a holy life ever remains that of being one with the Altar and the true Victim.

Paul knew the value of 'reasonable service' or 'spiritual worship'. His injunction, then, was, 'I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship'. 'The mercies of God' are that work of salvation which He has effected in Christ, i.e. the Cross and Resurrection, both of which constitute the Atonement—the effecting of our reconciliation with God.

No sacrifice could be holy and acceptable to God unless the altar had made it holy. God—Paul told his readers— wanted not a dead body upon the altar but a living sacrifice, i.e. a body which served Him in every action. Its walking, talking, hearing, doing and giving would be at the one time both service and worship. In presenting that

body to Him, at the Altar, sanctification not only took place but the new dynamic of holiness was made operative in the life of the 'living sacrifice'.

In another place Paul had said,

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not *yield* your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but *yield* yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

The word 'yield' here is the same as 'present' in the paragraph immediately above. Thus the apostle is saying, 'Present yourself consciously to God as the instruments of righteousness, for you have been made holy, so that now your bodies can only be used for holiness'.

This faith-understanding of ourselves will make us scorn the attempts of sin to enslave us. The guilt of sin has been removed so that the power of sin has been broken. This is the practical way of holiness of life.

The same apostle gives us a prescription for continuing practical holiness. Of things evil that seek to dominate the mind and body, he says, 'Put them to death'. The Death that dealt with them at Calvary makes it possible for faith to see them as dead and treat them as dead. Likewise Paul encourages believers to 'put off' things that are not of the nature of holiness and to 'put on' things that are. The things of life are what we must—and can—put on.

Because of the work of the Cross—the Holy Altar—believers are encouraged to purify their lives by rejecting unclean things in any form. They are also encouraged to live in holy love, for the outcome of such living is that one is 'filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ', for as we 'abound in love', so then

our hearts are 'established unblameable in holiness before our God and Father'.

A HOLY DECISION FOR DECISIVE HOLINESS

The question is not whether we have understood what is written above, but whether, understanding it, we have—in fact—presented ourselves to God in the light of Christ's Altar-work. Have we so trusted that work that we see in it our redemption, and our holiness? Have we so received purification that we gladly accept the obligation to be holy through the power of Christ, of his Spirit and of his Father, and in this mind present—or yield—ourselves to Him?

How can we say 'the altar sanctifies the gift' unless we have come, giftwise, to Him. How can we know the purification and sanctification of that Altar unless we have become one with the Victim? How can we know the continuing power for that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Until we are immolated in his sacrifice, how can we be purified and so continue in his purifying power? How else can we enter into, and live in, and worship in, the splendour of holiness?

How otherwise can we—and shall we—see Him 'face to face'?

The Day and Days of the Spirit

You are the Holy One! You moved
 Across the face of the deep;
 The waters stirred at your fast coming
 And your fast passing. With you
 The light came. With you
 The life came, life created,
 Darkness and light in their parting,
 The sun and the moon in their ruling—
 All order came from you.

You were the breath of creation,
 You were the light and the life;
 The breath He breathed into man
 Was you. Man took his form,
 His inner form, his true being
 From the breath entering, remaining,
 Sustaining. The Breath was giving life
 Personal being, being enriched by gifts—
 You were His eternal giving.

In the good days, the pure time,
 You were the life sustaining. You then
 Were the fruits—then as now—

And man's true fructification.
 Man the noble and the pure, unashamed
 In the glory of sheer nakedness,
 Man disported in the garden,
 High glee, steady serenity,
 The tranquillity of purposeful peace.

In the breaking, in the incredible ambition,
 In the heady rivalry of the beguiled woman,
 The steadily rebellious Adam,
 Was your grief, the angry vexation
 At the abdicated glory, the mean grasping
 After destructive autonomy. The bait
 When taken was the curse of death.
 This grieving to your life-givingness
 You tempered by the eternal wisdom
 And the working of the divine plan.
 For in you lay the full glories
 Of the elect purposes and the elect working.

In the passing years, the centuries, the millenniums,
 Your patience was in the wisdom, the good counsel,
 The noble plan, the eternal begetting in rime
 Of the fruit to be for ever. By patriarch,
 By elect nation, by the unwavering insistence
 In the rime of the rebellion, the people apostasy,
 The crazed orgies of the idolatry, the pompous insistence
 On the empty glories of self-deluded monarchs
 And the mad but solemn posturings
 Of the passing dictator; in all these times
 Your wisdom over all prevailed.
 Your prophets brought the brilliant assurance

Of the coming grace, the mindful promises
Of man's defeat and satanic felling.

His was the day—day of Messiah—
God coming as man under veils,
The unbelievable demonstration of the incarnate love
In the dry hills of Judea, the Galilean plains
And the age-old Zion—there he was,
The gentle and the strong, the judgemental
And the deliverer. From birth to death,
From death to life and to the ascension
He was your child, your man,
Your universal warrior and deliverer.
He banished death, bringing life and immortality
To light and revelation. You were the life
Within Messiah's life. You were the Spirit
In Cross and Resurrection.

In the great day, the day of your coming,
The day of outpouring by the Father and the Son,
The new day came, day in the desert,
Day when the dry bones and the enfleshed bodies
Received the new life for even there
You were bringing eternal renewal, regeneration
By the washing of the water, the blood,
The redeeming word in the new dynamic—
The word for ever new and for ever renewing—
Until Israel's holy remnant awoke
To their own cries of worship and wonder
And enlightened adoration.

This is your day—from Pentecost to *Parousia*—
The day of your great ministration.

The variety is entrancing, the diversity bewildering,
The use of love, peace and joy and all fruit
Beyond our comprehension but not our practice
In the outbreaking of grace, of unrestricted love
And your torrents of power flowing.
We are the joyous creatures of this your day,
Sinful yet ransomed, fleshly yet redeemed,
Unworthy though ennobled. We are the ones
Drinking the wine of your Spirit but yet sober
In the light of man's dire situation
And the intended encroaching of evil
On the new and holy people, the priestly
And prophetic people of the eternal Kingdom.

This is your day—the revealing of the Father,
The setting forth of Messiah
And the declaration of eternal Sonship.
This is the Day of the Eternal Spirit
Unto the eschaton and beyond;
The day of the announcement, the Marriage Day,
The Day of Messianic triumph—the descent
Of the Impeccable Bride and the victorious Husband,
The day of the for ever, and the day of union
With the Eternal One.

WHAT WAS, AND IS, AND IS TO COME

I saw in this vision, as I was both sleeping and waking, that I came to a doorway. The door was set in a stone structure shaped like a gothic arch, yet—for all I know—was somewhat womblike. I passed through this edifice, and the passing was remarkable, for its entrance set at its centre was so narrow as to prevent me, but then as I passed through it with ease I realised it was not substantial. I looked back with just a smidgen of puzzled surprise and found that in fact the doorway was in the shape of a cross, and I had passed through its upright.

Immediately inside the doorway I saw vast fields whose grass and flowers flowed gently under some great breeze. The breeze itself, though gentle, was strong, so that all things bowed before it. As in all visions there seems to be a Presence that somehow communicates with the visionary, so now I felt that Presence or Person.

For some moments I said nothing. I felt free from the pressures of the urgencies which we know in life, for we are always about doing something or other, as though not to be doing is a sign of death or emptiness, whilst always to

be doing something is the evidence of life which justifies our living.

To begin with, I knew not where I was, but then I did not wish to know, and in any case the Presence remained silent. I sensed the ease of everything, and wished that it had always been like this, or as this. So I stood without any urge to move out in those great and shining meadows. I heard the soft silver music of the breeze through grasses and flowers, and their gentle nodding responses.

After a time I perceived that beneath the grasses there were creatures. The pastures and flowers had simply flowed over that which was below them. I heard a rustling and a scurrying, the animal noises, some of them as happy chirruping creatures but others as biting, snarling and angry creatures. When I looked up into the trees the same contrast was evident. Some birds sang happy songs. Larks ascended into the beautiful blue of the skies, and although the birds were out of sight, their songs dropped in golden and fluid notes, their melodies strange yet easily understood. Other birds were those of prey, whose talons were long, whose heads were lowered, whose beaks were sharp and cruel.

After a time it came to me that I had been here before. 'Deja vu,' I said to myself, but it was not *deja vu*. I realised that once I had belonged here, and that even now I belonged here, though not wholly here. I was not distressed at my unknowing, but was certainly puzzled. Still the Presence did not speak, and I was content. I set my mind to understand the creatures about us, for as yet I had not seen a mortal human, or one which was immortal. Even

so, I did not feel lonely, and that was perhaps because of the Presence. I felt that if I were to turn about I might see the Presence, but I kept my gaze on the animals and birds.

Not only were these animals and birds of two kinds— the calm and the agitated, the gentle and the cruel—but the flowers suddenly appeared in their true light. Some flowers were smooth and beautiful, gay and colourful, but others were twisted and dark, rusted with diseases or black and blasted, so much so that it was painful to look at them. Yet the beautiful and the ugly, the colourful and the discoloured, grew together. Amongst them there were creatures who chattered with anger, and others who made excited and joyous sounds. From the birds above came lovely songs, and bitter and resentful utterances. As my seeing became more penetrative, I saw larger animals in grass, bushes and trees, and these too were either graceful and peaceful, or snarling and hurtful.

At this point I knew I had to have recourse to the Presence, and said plaintively, ‘Tell me, please, what is this place, and where, and what does it all mean—this mixture of peaceful and harsh things?’ With some difficulty I refrained from turning as I asked.

The Voice of the Presence replied, ‘What you see is no new thing. This is the state in which you have always lived. You have been and seen evil. You have known the good of that which is good. Part of you has rejoiced in the right, and part in the wrong. Whilst all that He has created is good, and all that Evil and you have envisaged as delectable and satisfying has been wrong, so now you see the blighted, blasted flowers as twisted, wrong and evil amongst the beauty of that which is good. You wish the evil would be destroyed and that which is good to be

perpetually good and present.’

I answered, ‘Oh Presence, what you have said is so true. It is just that this place seemed so perfect to begin with, but to my disappointment it is not so. Can it then be changed? Does the good and the evil have to dwell side by side?’

The Voice replied to me. ‘What you see is so; the good and the evil stand side by side. I do not say—as do some—that the evil is an illusion, and that it is unreal. It is real, yet it has no essential substance. In the ultimate it is a parody of the real. The word of God never created it, but unbelief and rebellion have given it a seeming reality, until ignorant humanity gives its master authentic being, and the evil deeds a lasting place amongst things which are true.’

I pondered this in my heart and mind, and then asked a question: ‘Do you mean, O Divine Presence, that sin and evil have no reality, and their master no authentic being? Do you mean that they are not true, and in the ultimate reckoning of all things—that which I know you call “the Judgement”—they will disappear?’

The Presence said, ‘What you speak is true, so you are blessed if you understand and believe these things. There are those who believe that good and evil are but two aspects of the one thing. Others say the good is genuine, and the evil an illusion. I say to you that evil comes only with rebellion against that which is good, for it poses as good, and changes the value of the good. It poses as the good, and builds a counter-kingdom against the Kingdom of God. In this sense it has no true existence, and at the Judgement this will be shown to be so.’

‘What then,’ I asked, ‘is the evil of evil?’

The Voice replied, ‘Evil’s evil is to present itself as the

good, and the good as the evil. Evil's evil is to build so as to divert the eyes of man from the only True God, and make out the idols to have such authentic being.'

All this I could understand, for in one sense I had ever understood it, but the beauty of the place in which I then stood and discerned the evil from the good, and the good of the truly good, was of such beauty that I yearned for it to be wholly good.

'When, O Great and Holy Presence, shall all of this be good and beautiful only, and none of evil be part of it?'

When I asked this, I heard holy laughter of such quality and joy that I could have fainted with the sheer perfection and delight it brought to me.

After this trill of laughing joy, the Voice said, 'Here there is no evil thing. Here it is only good.' 'Why then,' I replied, 'do I see what you say is not here?' The Voice quietly answered my mystification. 'If you could fully see what you think is here, and indeed what once was here but is no more, then your being could not only not comprehend it, but it would be shattered by the evil, and be in agony at the holiness and goodness of the Creator and all His creation. The evil would be so evil that the spirit of a man would almost die for grief and horror of it, for as no man can understand the good of good, neither can he understand the evil of evil.'

I asked, 'Why then do I see the evil that is not here, when the evidences of it are everywhere in the grasses, the flowers, the trees, the earth, the waters and the winds?'

The Voice spoke softly and gently in reply: 'From whence, then, O man, have you come?'

I answered, 'From that doorway which is like a Womb or a Tomb, and through the entrance which is shaped as a

Cross. I come from the other side of that'

If one can hear a smile in a voice, then I heard it in that Voice. It answered, 'All that you have ever done and been is here: all that all men have done and been is here. You see it all.'

'Then,' I said, in a strange sensing of it all, 'I am in the Past'

The Presence agreed. 'It is true that you are in the Past, for everything you now see is in that Past.'

I had a flash of understanding. 'Then what I see are my sins, and perhaps my own acts of goodness.'

'What you see,' the Voice explained, 'is all that God has made you to be, and with you others of your kind. The blasted flowers and trees are your sins, and the beauty of all things is His good, which in turn He has given to you.' 'Then how,' I asked, 'will this be changed?'

'It has been changed,' the Voice said, 'for around you is only purity, goodness, true life and love. The blasted and the twisted, the angry and the evil of you has been wholly changed. If you look with the eyes of faith you will see this.'

As I looked I saw a miracle happen. A gracious quietness descended upon all things. The muttering, murmuring, chattering and scolding ceased, and in its place came an harmonious singing and worshipping of such a nature that I could have died with the joy and serenity of it. As I looked closely I saw the blighted flowers and foliage had now become fresh and whole. Look though I may, I could see no imperfection.

Out of a sweet anguish of joy I cried, 'What happened?'

What has happened?’

There came no answer, but something within me compelled me to look back at the gateway through which I had entered. Although the time was that of daylight, even high noontide, yet that gate glowed brilliantly. Its light was soft—a pastel-white you might say—but it glowed as though some flame were pulsating through it. At its centre was the Cross, giving light to, and sight of, its Womb and Tomb.

‘There is your answer,’ said the Voice. ‘He who comes through Womb and Tomb, who comes through Cross to the Now, has purified his Past.’

‘Then this is my Past?’ I said wonderingly.

‘Past, yes,’ was the reply, ‘but also the Present and the Future, for before God they are the one. Your Past is purified, and so it is a place in which to revel, to worship and to praise.’

I was incredulous. ‘You mean there is now no evil in, from, or of my Past?’

The Presence said gently, ‘That is true, but you must see this thing not by sight but by faith. Then it will be real to you’.

I felt the pain in my throat, and my eyes started with tears. I said, sadly and yet hopefully, ‘You mean that if I believe, then my faith will bring this great thing into being, whereas if I do not have faith it will not be so?’ To me this seemed so wonderful and yet so terrible. I added, ‘My faith, then, must be a great power.’ I was deeply awed. ‘If I do not have faith, nothing will be as it could be.’

The Voice said softly, yet strongly and firmly, ‘What you say is not so. Your faith, of itself, produces nothing and changes nothing. That God has done Himself, but

your faith must see and believe what is, that what the Word has said is so, because He Himself has already done it.’

I could only look wonderingly at Cross and Tomb and Womb, where the light was still pulsating.

‘Oh, Presence and Voice,’ I cried, ‘now I truly understand. My Past is purified and I am free from the evil I have done. It is no more.’

‘What you say is true,’ the Voice agreed, ‘but there is more. Here you see not only Past, but Present and Future. They are all of the one. If you who have been born anew of faith and have entered by the way of the New Birth, the Death with Christ, and the Rising with him from his Tomb—if you, I say, have faith, then this great grace which has come upon you by his grace will cause you to rejoice continually that he has won this great freedom for you by that Cross and that Resurrection. The evil has been evicted, that which is bad exorcised, and that which is not substantially true has all been defeated. He has made you to be free, and to rejoice in his perfect freedom.’

There was grace with me that day to believe the immeasurable love of God, and so I believed. I saw, there, that there is no Past which can bind me in my Present, nor a passing Present which can cause me to lose the Future. Great hope for the Future is here in the Present, and this is strong because there is no Past to accuse me!

‘In the Then-time,’ I cried, ‘I will be in the Present-time, and to this Present-time which has become the Past-time I will return again and again, and walk these meadows and plains, these vales, dales, hills and mountains, and I will see the hand of the Lord upon all things. Then I will live

in hope for the future. This shall be my way—the way of faith in Him!’

As I cried this, my eyes were opened afresh, and I saw—across the pastures, the plains, up hills and down dales, on the mountains, and upon every river and sea—a vast multitude. I had thought I was looking only on my own, but here I saw what was in truth my own, but which was also theirs, namely the whole body of God’s beloved elect, the redeemed of the Father, spread as a great and gentle Family, lifting eyes to heaven and praising Him who lives for ever and ever, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord of all time and eternity, and, for us all, the Lord of the Then-time, the Now-time, and the New-time to come.

My spirit, which had so often been tired, cold, aloof and absurdly conservative, now opened itself to this great miracle, and my voice of praise joined with theirs, and we sang so sweet a song that I could not at last sustain such joy, such love and peace, and I feared I would expire.

Expire I did not. I was simply awake in my bed, and around me was the world I had always known. This did not terrify me, nor cause old despair to return. As I lay there I knew the greatness of our Creator, our Redeemer, our Father and our King. The Son, too, was present with me, as though never to depart, and so in my spirit I still rejoiced with all the elect of God.

This, I am sure, I will ever do, but the life I now live is so transformed that it can never be what it was, but will continue ever to be what one day it will be in unremitting fullness. Hence my praise is for that great gateway to

everlasting life, and my song is of praise for the Cross, the Tomb and the Womb—forever!

Everything Was Jagged

Everything was jagged and staccato,
 It was shapelessness without rhythm,
 Movement without time,
 A sad sighing but also emptiness;
 It was sound cacophony
 And mind fragmentation—
 Yet all the pieces were there.

On a wish you cannot achieve harmony,
 You cannot jig-saw the puzzle peacefully,
 But you can desire that
 It all be one. No harm in desiring.

Behind the desire I saw the thought grow,
 I saw something emerge—
 Something powerfully beautiful
 And sternly insistent
 It was a hand. (Whose hand was it?)
 Anyway it worked—that hand.
 It achieved harmony suddenly.

Simultaneously—and in a trice—
 All the pieces flew together,

At first ridiculously—some still jagged
 And others hastening passionately
 To fit into place.
 They did, and before you could believe it
 It was all harmony.

It was the beginning of the world,
 But also its end
 And then it was also
 Its new beginning.