

The background of the entire image is a colorful, painterly illustration. It depicts a landscape with a river or stream in the middle ground, surrounded by trees with green and white foliage. In the foreground, there are several large, conical hay bales. Numerous rabbits are scattered throughout the scene, some sitting on the hay bales, some on the ground, and some near the water. The overall style is reminiscent of a folk-art or naive painting.

WHERE CONIES DWELL

Geoffrey C Bingham



New Creation Publications Inc.

PEOP
HART

Where Conies Dwell

and selected prose, essays and poetry

Geoffrey C. Bingham

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Tall Grow the Tallow-woods
To Command the Cats
Mr Piffy Comes Home
The Days and Dreams of Arcady
The Raymond Connection
The Boy, the Girl, and the Man
The Spirit of All Things
Laughing Gunner
The Boy in the Valley
Twice-conquering Love*

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Foreword:

A Word to the Weak

WHERE CONIES DWELL: HOME OF THE FEEBLE

ALISTAIR McLean's book *Where Eagles Dare* speaks of lofty eyries and great exploits. Doubtless the film of these exploits moved its viewers quite deeply. Against such magnificent heroes a bunch of conies seem trivial, pitifully insignificant, wholly inadequate. The cony is rabbit-like and in fact related to that species. It is quite small with ears rounded rather than elongated as are those of a rabbit. Curiously enough these little creatures harvest greenery and make hay from it, hiding it under the rocks where it dries out for fodder for winter. These 'rock rabbits' are clever, and quickly spot the enemy, and unlike the related rabbits, they are vocal and utter a bleat-like sound when the enemy comes near them. On the whole they are unimpressive, but they survive.

Readers of this new book of ours—*Where Conies Dwell*—will quickly pick up the contrast between 'the feeble people' and the strong *macho* heroes of McLean's book. In North America and Eurasia the little creatures will be seen alert but eating, yet at a

sound they will scuttle back into the rocks where they make their homes. They are not equipped for fighting or defending themselves, but they have survived thousands of generations. They make their homes in the rocks and are the most difficult of creatures to capture. They have learned the principle 'When I am weak, then am I strong', and so they win life not by manoeuvres, manipulation or politicking, but by 'an appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God'. None can grasp the cony of this kind for the feeble ones use love and mercy and grace to bring about good ends, and not by what is now known as 'power-play'.

When thinking of a title there were other stories in this collection whose titles seemed more commanding such as 'Beezers, Nortons and Tiger Cubs' and 'The Boy, the Bush and the Bells' and even 'Sindhis Singing in the Night', but if you scan the poems, essays and stories you will see they seem to have something in common—the power of God, and the weakness of human beings. 'The Old Lag' represents a weak kind of person, 'The Bland Man' the laid-back person of our day, thought by some to be 'laid-out'! The constant references to God's forgiveness, and his love, as also our interpersonal acts of love, seem to speak of a contemptible weakness. Seasoned folk put on a better face to the world, whilst the cynics sneer at any suggestion of softness.

Books such as *Where Conies Dwell* are nevertheless closer to the reality of life than *Where Eagles Dare* for all of us know the great adventurers are a tribe of their own. Most of us make out in life, and often without great demonstrations of success. As has been said, 'It is the last chapter that counts'. Some

of us end life in a mumble rather than a whimper. Few go off with a great bang.

The selection of poems, short stories and essays in this series of Christian 'Smorgasbord' books is intended to entertain. Who does not like entertainment? Seeing our own weaknesses, foibles and idiosyncrasies is highly entertaining, especially if we do not take ourselves too seriously. Yet the richest form of entertainment is accepting what is around us, even if we do not condone what is wrong, or compromise our principles in the face of it. Laughter is a good solvent for an over-serious or morbid spirit. So we can see genuine fun in our own weak-nesses, and we can love the antics of our fellow-creatures. Life is rich, and the creation about us entertains on the highest level.

Yet, given all that, we need to see the two things which I ever keep in mind—the fallenness of Man and the tragedy of his depravity, and then the fact that man is made in the image of God and cannot escape what he would deny. This is why we are curious creatures. We may be moralistic but we lack moral power, and we cannot accomplish great projects of the spirit without being strengthened by divine power. Those of us who have artistic gifts—and especially those of us who have developed them keenly—are always in danger of human pride, and that sort of pride is most distasteful and leads to destructive egotism. We think we accomplish much, but there can be a withering of the true ego in the success of accomplishment that it may obtain.

I hope that in this book—as in former similar productions—there will be something for every reader, be it in the poetry, the essays and/or the stories. I notice that I have developed much of my

WHERE CONIES DWELL

writing along lines which are either of fantasy or making the impossible to appear real. Perhaps there is some whimsy in this. I notice also a nostalgia for former years. Older folk find great treasures in their memories, and know that much writing capital is available in them. In addition, I find much of my writing is autobiographical, even though some of it may be put into the third person. I am sure I repeat myself with certain events and happenings, but then one keeps seeing these from new angles, and so the readers of my other books must be patient with me.

Finally, I must admit to being a cony in many ways. More and more I slip away into God as my dwelling place, my hillside of rocks and stones, the place where I can hide, but the environment is so powerful that it charges me with new and stronger impulses to write, and so share the treasures I have been aided to accumulate. As the mysterious cony cuts its own hay and hides it near or under rocks, so I gather sustenance for these final days of rich activity.

Perhaps this book will encourage you to know that when you grow old you will be far from barren. You may heap up little that secures you economically but your spirit will be rich with the 'treasures of wisdom and knowledge' that are contained in our blessed Lord. I try to share mine without demanding ought in return, and it will go well with you if you take this principle for true living.

Beezers, Nortons and Tiger Cubs

WHEN they rushed the Nipponese machine-gun post it was nestled below the level of the road, so they raced towards it, shooting and yelling. Maybe they were emulating the enemy with their frightening noises, or maybe they were keeping up their own spirits, but they kept running and kept yelling, blood surging, their minds in a kind of determined madness. He was well in the forefront. Goddie heard the almost musical yammer of it—the rise and fall of its singing, of its lethal song. Then the impact of a burst of fire toppled him. At the same time the yammering ceased, stuttering to its own death. Not, however, the shells screaming overhead, and the mortars bursting and exploding everywhere: all of that was still alive. Yet all their noise meant nothing to him: the pain in his leg was excruciating. His spirit was greatly shocked to realise the limb was shattered. Those following him had veered off to the right, and then gone. He was alone.

A mortar whizzed over his head and exploded below, shattering but not catching him. As he lay there watching the blood gush down the road, his first strange thought was, 'I'll never be able to ride a horse again!' The second thought was, 'I'll never be able to ride a motorcycle again!'

He shouldn't have been remembering at that moment, but memory kept coming back to him of what he used to call his 'golden gelding', and the first fast ride he had across from the Kellyville flats to his home at Box Hill, getting there before his Dad arrived in the Chrysler. This, after they had bought the gelding. It was black with sweat and foam and he had worked hard with currycomb and hessian bag to dry it before his father returned.

As for motorcycles, his head could not bring out all the machines he had ridden from two-stroke Coventry Eagles, the old AJC, to Douglasses with horizontally opposed cylinders and then the Beezers and Nortons of the army equipment stock.

After a while the pain drove these thoughts from his mind. His leg was askew, across the road. Shells went on whining and thumping, but the mortars had ceased in the first light of dawn. After a time the team came and lifted him up and sent him off in a utility with other wounded—they being Indians.

Even in prison days he would think of the golden gelding, and other horses he had ridden. When he got to dragging his leg along in a Thomas splint, he was sure he would never have the joy of a gallop, of a horse with its neck stretched out, tail flying, mane flying, his own heart flying—flying, flying, flying. Nor would he have the days when he would follow the line of motorcycles, all crouched over the handlebars, swinging around the macadamised roads, swerving round and taking the bends, leaning out, drawing up, revving, accelerating, and always keeping convoy space between the vehicles. Up and down the peninsula on the strip, the slim black strip

of highway on which the crazy Indian truck drivers would hug the crest, daring them to change their speed by driving at them. There was nothing to that: they would swerve outwards or inwards and pass the trucks and leave them for dead, whilst the drivers incanted from their magic, or chanted from their ancient hymns, only to be defeated by these daredevils who glued themselves to their wheels, the songs of their engines rising and falling as one, and their eyes as dreamless as eyes can be when they are centred on the crest of the road.

Of course no one had the privilege of driving an army mount unless he went through the Don Rs' (Despatch Riders') course. He remembered Bathurst Camp, and the tough stretch they had to do for days, and even weeks, belting it out across the undulations of old paddocks, weaving in and out of de-wired fence posts, rushing the dry creek bed, and then rising along its perpendicular banks, the cycles almost leaning out at the horizontal. There were the running starts, the machine in gear then letting in the clutch, running alongside then leaping on, and sometimes standing on saddle and tank, steering with the feet. It had all been exciting. Don Rs always lived on adrenalin.

There had been other days before they ran in the BSAs and the Nortons. Some of the Don Rs would take single trips from Singapore to the top of the Peninsula, because they had a special message to decant, and then return—top to tip, crossing the Causeway onto the Island. All of this the Don Rs loved, but none of it was war, only preparation for it—if war should ever happen.

Then, of course, it did happen. For a couple of months confusion ranged from Alor Star to Johore

Bahru, and main issues and side issues were fought, as the Nipponese horde made its way through jungles, crossed rivers, blew up bridges, remade blown-up bridges, let off crackers in a fearsome noise and an unholy rush, and Allied troops fought new kinds of battles, until they had to hustle to the causeway across the Johore Straits and take up defensive positions on Singapore Island.

He—Goddie—had loved the business of watching the line communications from his Norton. Often he would whine off in the night on his own, or sometimes he would sit with Vic as he drove the cable-truck. They would evade the persistent Japanese fighters and bombers that sought them out—such as the day they kept contact between Mersing and Endau, and tried out their new Tommy guns on the monkeys high up in the jungle's giant trees. Then there was the strategic withdrawal to Singapore Island, and he was backwards and forwards, superintending the lines, part of a team welded together. Those were days and nights when the Despatch Riders—all helmeted and equipped with side arms and Tommy guns—worked through the hours without sleep, but with the intensity of purpose that war brings to its troops.

On the Island they took a short sleep after their weeks of no sleep. Then it was to the lines again, keeping the infantry units in touch. The signal cables were either being slashed by the incessant shelling from the other side of Johore, or—when the enemy landed—by the silent Nipponese who cut and waited for the Sigs. who would come to test and repair the lines, in which case they would be prepared for them with rifle and bayonet, and even—if officers—with Samurai swords.

Memorable—unforgettable—was the time he took Brig. Taylor pillion around the companies and battalions of the 23rd Brigade, and advised him of dispositions that were constantly changed. That was not long before the end. He had ridden his Norton until the last few hours before the attack on the machine-gun nest. And now he would ride no more. His leg had lost its power of nerve, and was partly paralysed. How could you grip a horse's girth with your knees and thighs, and kick the flanks, when one leg was limp? How could you lift your front wheel and ride high on the back, and drop it and wheel and slither and slide and still hold control? He didn't know.

Some of his memories as he chewed the cud from a prison surgical bed would be of riding horses when he was a youth, and learning to ride a cycle at the latter end of those years. No one taught him, but he made out. He learned how not to turn on gravel roads, and how to accelerate and brake on wet bitumen roads, and the outback tracks where you slewed in mud, or got tipped over the handlebars. One day when he was tired he found himself waking up as he was riding in a deep roadside gutter, so deep that he was wholly below the road, but then he made it, and enjoyed the escape from accident. There were accidents of course, and because of one he lived with the effects of concussion for weeks, but never had a broken skull or fractured limbs.

He remembered one crazy day when he took his brother Norman on pillion to see his girlfriend. They tracked it across country, and his brother thought he was mad, but then he was no madder than the brother when he was driving in his semi-racing motor vehicle. The hilarious thing was that

his brother had never judged him to be a crazy rider. He had always thought him to be as careful and stolid about a motorcycle as he was about some other things, for he did not always race golden geldings, and he was steady behind the two-furrow plough with horses in double harness.

When they arrived at Wilberforce the young women admired the pair, and he remembered recklessly carrying each of them pillion whilst Norman and the others watched and pointed and roared uproariously and he wondered whether he had taken leave of his own senses. No one before that had taken him for a lady-killer, and on his prison bed he wondered about some of those girls and what was happening to them and with them. Being rural lasses they had probably joined the Land Army.

When they came home from the war he should have learned to drive a four-wheeled vehicle, but he calculated that his right leg wouldn't allow him to drive properly, so he refused to learn. When they settled on the North Coast he would plod behind a ploughhorse with his special tiller and turn over enough soil for growing market vegetables, but for the most part he wrote—wrote stories about the characters in his district, and the incidents he imaged were happening in their lives. There were stories, too, about the war. In that place there were always friends with farm trucks or utilities, or cars, and in any case there were buses they could use.

He would sometimes get up on Major and ride that plodding Clydesdale, but there was no thought of Major bolting, or of kicking him into a canter. Stockhorses he now dreaded. Motorcycles he tried to forget. He fostered the gammy leg and watched that

nothing happened to the good one. On the whole, he had gotten over his dream of riding again—horses and motorcycles. He kept away from speedways, and was contented with his lot of farming and writing and teaching.

When the family came—the six children—bit by bit but inevitably, he wanted to give them mobility. So when they arrived in Pakistan they bought bicycles. He found to his delight he could propel a cycle, and he did. Not in the hills of course—not up 5,000 to 7,000 feet with steep inclines and narrow roads, and drops of thousands of feet if you went too close to the edge, or if a passing vehicle swiped you thoughtlessly.

Down on the plains at Hyderabad—in the hot Sindh—they would cycle from one side of the ancient walled city to the other—some couple of miles. They would even put their cycles on the top of a bus until it reached its road limits, and then they would go on their cycles out into the scrubby desert, seeking to find the folk they had to teach in villages or camped where there work was—farming the newly irrigated acres. It was hard work churning the cycle wheels through the loose sandy soil, but they liked it all. Often they had to walk, leading the cycles until they reached their destination.

The closest to speed riding was to buy a racing cycle. He did this when they returned home for furlough. It had a number of gears and their Pakistani friends looked at it agape, and with no little envy. So he could cycle through the Cantonment with ease and great speed, but a motorcycle was always there in the back of his mind.

Once, up in the Hills, he taught his children to ride. The riding school allotted a servant to each horse to care for it and its rider on the roads that were dangerous when vehicles suddenly turned a bend and came on the horses and riders. He wanted his children to sit as he had sat, and once—on impulse—he threw himself into the saddle of a hackney, throwing his partly useless leg over it and his foot into a stirrup.

It just didn't work. He gammy leg could not grip the girth of the animal, and his foot had no hold in the stirrup. He tried shortening the stirrup leather, but it could not keep his foot from dangling so that he would be unequal in his balance. A kind of frustration and sorrow took him as he climbed down and let the men from the school teach his children. One of his moods took hold of him and for a couple of days he could not shake it off.

He watched one of his New Zealand friends—a missionary named Trevor who looked like a pumpkin on a pimple as he rode his Tiger Cub Triumph. A heavy man, he was able to get good measure out of his small motorcycle. Goddie was amazed at the speed he could reach with the little Cub. Goddie thought of the larger Triumph and its 500 ccs. Even so, his hands itched to get hold of the smaller Tiger Cub, and he longed to be in its saddle. He would turn away, time and again, to hide his disappointment. He tried to avoid the moods which came from disappointment, and mainly succeeded. He would get on his racing cycle, and go for a few miles out into the country and sit on the edge of a canal, and think. When he returned he was always cheerful, but the children looked at him side-eyed.

One day his missionary friend came to him.

He said, 'We are going home on furlough. Would you like my Tiger Cub? You can have it for the taking. Friends back at home bought it for the work, and so they would be glad for you to have it.'

Goddie could not believe his ears. He accepted the gift, of course, but that night he did not sleep. His mind became fevered, his imagination rioted. The next morning he waited until the children were away at school, and his wife had gone visiting over the other side of the city, having cycled her way through heat that was well over a hundred degrees Fahrenheit. The students had gone off on a project with the College staff so that no one was present except Trevor. He had brought the cycle over from the other compound. He dismounted and handed the Tiger Cub to Goddie. Goddie's heart began to pound. He was trembling as he sat astride the machine. What he had to do came back to him, as though it was only yesterday that he had carried Brig. Taylor, pillion. He opened the throttle, kick-started the machine, and it roared into life. He sat there, legs astride and feet on the ground. He revved the engine, and heard it first roar and then drop to a purr as he partly closed the throttle. He engaged the first gear, lifted his legs on to the footrests, and let the cycle slowly wobble forward. Then he revved it slightly and took off from the courtyard, the motorcycle moving forwards ever so slowly.

He suddenly knew he had revived his sense of balance, his gammy leg notwithstanding. He opened the throttle wider and almost lurched onto the main Cantonment road. It was empty of traffic and he opened the throttle until the machine was purring along ever so sweetly. Once his weak foot slipped

from its rest but he lifted it and tried to firm it down. In any case he leaned a little to the left and compensated for the weaker leg. Something stirred his blood, or was it in his blood? He did not know: he simply knew he wanted to speed up that main road. And he did. He knew in a moment that he could ride a motorcycle. All those years he could have driven a cycle. No matter: here he was riding—*now!*

When he returned there was the large missionary standing, legs apart, solid, hands on hips, and surveying him.

'You have only one thing more to do, and that is to take me back to the compound, pillion.'

Goddie said, 'You must be joking. This Cub won't take us both.'

'Takes Mary and me,' Trevor said, 'and you don't have the machine unless you take me back. I'm not paying for a *tonga*.'

Goddie grinned. He knew Trevor would prefer to take a *tonga*—the horse drawn vehicle something like the light cart or sulky he had known as a boy. He knew his missionary friend wanted to establish him in his riding, and he was grateful for that.

'Get on,' he said. Trevor sat on the pillion, helping to support the motorcycle whilst his friend kick-started it, and revved the engine enough to take them both forward.

It was as though he was back with the Brigadier, going places, or with brother Norman going cross-country to Wilberforce and the rural girls. They roared out into the main street of the Cantonment where there was little traffic to worry them. Then they were in the city, dodging the horsedrawn and motor vehicles coming towards them. Going up the Tilak Incline—the steepest part of the city—the

engine began to sputter but Goddie had a proper feel for it now, and they made it to the crest, turned into the compound and chug-chugged to Trevor's house. Edna and Mary were having a cup of tea, and they came out—cups in hand—and watched the two men draw up near the door. Edna flashed a look of encouragement to her man, and Mary gave an approving nod.

He could scarcely drink the tea they gave him: so excited was he. He knew that in one way it was a small and simple crisis he had been through, but he found it greatly liberating. Edna left her bicycle for someone else to ride to the Cantonment, and she went pillion with her husband back to their campus. The Pakistanis in the city compound cheered as the pair made their way out through the gateway. There were others—including the returned students and staff—who were on the College campus, and they cheered no less. There was a lot of grinning and joking and teasing but Goddie took it all well. He was elated.

Sunday nights after the service for expatriates, he and Edna would ride out from the city, and find their way to the coolness of a canal, and sit on the grassed banks, the machine propped up behind them. They knew the children would be cared for by visitors who had gone to their house for supper. Sunday nights became a special weekly treat for them, and a time when they could relax and chat, and throw off the busyness that crowded the week days.

The children clamoured for rides in the fore-noons when they returned from school. Just before lunch, when his lectures were ended, he would take them around the large compound, accompanied by

the cheers of the College students. He knew they thought more highly of him for the thing he was doing. It altered the image they had had, enhancing it. He taught the older men to ride, and knew they would not rest until somehow they owned a similar machine.

Then a fresh war broke out between Pakistan and India. Mostly these wars had been up north, and generally in Kashmir. Now it was down south, along the borders of Pakistan and India. The city compound was securely locked and barricaded. Some missionaries were American and at that time the Pakistan Government was angry with the U.S.A. so that even missionaries could be in danger. The Cantonment compound was an open one, but the local Police assured Goddie and the family that they would be safe. They were well known as being Australians.

Dusk had scarcely fallen when they heard someone at the front door. It was an Englishman from the Embassy in Karachi. He had travelled up to alert all British expatriates, and get them out of Hyderabad.

In his own way he was deeply concerned for Goddie's family and the families of all Australian and New Zealand missionaries.

'Just thought I would pop in,' he said jovially, 'and tell you we have made arrangements to get you all out by midnight. We will have trucks, you know, and they will take you across the Kotri Bridge; otherwise there is no hope of escape. Dashed difficult you know, because according to our Intelligence the Indian Army will be here tomorrow, and there is no knowing what they might do.'

The children were backed up behind Edna. She looked at Goddie and smiled, and he grinned back at her, and then at the Embassy man.

'We appreciate what you are doing,' Goddie told him, 'but we shan't be leaving.'

The Englishman nodded and coughed, coughed and nodded. 'Didn't think you would,' he said cheerily. 'You're different, you folk. Oh well, all the very best. I must be toddling along. Others to see, you know. I expect they will all leave, with the exception of you folk of course.' He walked off, head down, ruminating.

The children had picked up the feeling of fear that was concealed under the words of their visitor.

'What is going to happen?' they asked. 'Did he say the Indian Army will be here, tomorrow?'

'He did say that,' admitted Goddie, 'but we have nothing to worry about.'

Edna gave the children a special treat of the local fruit cake they loved, some Pakistani jellabis—their favourite sweet—ice-cream made that day in a churn and the cordial they were given only at times of special treats. That convinced them something was not the best, but they showed no fear.

The Indian army never arrived. Instead trucks of Indian prisoners did, and they were taken to the city gaol, where, during the Second World War, prisoners of war had been incarcerated—rebels from the Sindh Province who hated the British Raj and were actively subversive. Now it was a prisoner of war camp for the newly captured Indians.

Goddie thought they ought to visit the city compound and give some comfort to the missionaries, many of whom were single women. They left the

children in the care of the students and the servants, knowing also that the Cantonment police would have their eye on the College campus.

Edna sat pillion, and Goddie moved steadily from the Cantonment to the city. He noticed that no one waved to them. There was a stolid sort of atmosphere in the streets. Goddie had the distinct impression that if they once stopped they would be mobbed. They did stop at the city compound but it was securely locked and barred and no one would open to them. When they banged on the ironclad gates no one cared to open them.

Goddie saw some of the provincial folk move towards them, and he started up the engine and they moved quickly away. It was then that the trucks laden with Indian prisoners moved up the Tilak Incline and on towards the gaol. A great roar went up from the crowd. Suddenly the streets were thickly lined with Pakistanis who seemed to appear from nowhere. Because he understood the local language Goddie knew what abuse these southern Pakistanis were hurling at the captured Indians, and the mood was harshly cruel, and even murderous. Those lining the streets would have been glad to tear the prisoners out of the safety of the trucks and kill them. Goddie noted the unfriendly looks many were directing towards them.

At the end of the road stood the great stone gaol, and here the trucks had pulled up, whilst they were slowly processing the first batch of disembarking prisoners, and leading them to their cells. The hiatus caused by the backed-up vehicles, and the nearness of the hated Indians stimulated what Goddie saw was a blood lust. He sensed that any moment it could be let loose on them. He gave a friendly wave to the crowd,

to the people who previously had never molested them, and never even threatened them.

Today everything was different. There was no friendliness. There was anger and hatred, and a desire to do something to the hated enemy. They may even have thought that the two white people were Americans and therefore supporters of the Indians. This was a false rumour put about by some, but it was enough to put the Australian couple in deep danger.

Goddie knew that if he turned his motorcycle to make his way back through the gathered crowd, then he and Edna would be mobbed, and their motorcycle either confiscated or smashed into pieces. The only way was forward, but if the crowd moved left and joined with others on the opposite side of the road, then the situation would be hopeless. He had stopped the engine before, as they were watching the prisoners being disembarked. Could he kick-start it without the mob seeing him do it? Could he get up enough speed to make a getaway before the crowd encircled them?

He pushed down on the starter, had his throttle open, and the Tiger Cub made a leap. The crowd saw it and they too, were kick-started. They rushed forward to cut off the escape of the two on the cycle, but the machine leapt through the narrowing space, and turned left towards Kotri. Goddie knew that they would try to follow, but the little machine was magnificent. Hundreds ran after them, shaking their fists and crying slogans against the hated Yankees.

Goddie knew he would never forget the hatred-filled eyes, the wrathful looks of people who normally were persons of peace. Now they were enraged, and there was a terrible blood lust in their

whole beings. It reminded him, sickeningly, of the days of war, and of all the days of human enmity that had begun with the primal murderer Cain. He sighed for the terrible knowledge of it all.

Edna was holding tightly to him, and he felt her strong breathing, and he heard a gasp or two. Miraculously, marvellously, they were a mile along the Kotri road, and the little machine beneath them was throbbing as though with pride in itself and fit to burst with it. Goddie found he had the throttle fully opened, and he closed it a bit because by this time no one was running after them. The crowd had returned to the gaol to gloat over the manacled prisoners.

A rich sense of peace and delight came to the two of them. They were on the way back to their children by a back road, but they were safe. The land around them was empty of human beings and even of cattle, and after a while, Goddie stopped the machine, and they sat, looking about them.

Goddie thought, 'Beezers and Nortons and now a Triumph Tiger Cub.' He was grateful for their escape, but something of the old magic was there in remembering his succession of motorcycles, and the events related to them. When the World War finished he had thought it would be peace for the remainder of his life, but a few minutes ago both their lives could have been ended by the senseless passion of mindless human patriotism.

He patted the tank of the engine affectionately. Privately he had thought the motorcycle to be too small, and a bit of a toy, but he thought that no longer. The 'tiger in the tank' might have been a cub once, but now it was a tiger in its own rights. He patted it again.

Edna was still sitting pillion, and her arms were tightly around him. He turned his head and grinned down at her. She looked up at him and smiled warmly. For a moment the two looked at the country around with its desert scrub, and its salty soil—barren and yet beautiful in its own way—and they savoured the moment.

Then he had the engine running, and Edna was clinging to him as they roared off. For his part he opened the throttle as far as it would go, and they were both surprised at what their little cub was capable of doing, as it bumped and leapt on the corrugated road, so that Goddie's never-ceasing admiration of Beezers and Nortons now included the machine beneath them, as they rushed towards home, and the children, and whatever the future held for them.

The Weak Ones

'Lord, I am weak,' we cry—
 We who are the weak ones—
 'We would do great exploits for You
 But we are too feeble.
 Drained of the strength of youth
 We feel our feebleness,
 Wearing it almost as a badge of shame.
 Lord!' we cry, 'We are so weak.'

'They are so strong Lord!
 Is the cry of our hearts.
 They who have endless resources,
 Pride of their minds
 Inwit to outwit the others
 Climbing over them to victory.
 Admired by all they preen themselves
 Knowing contempt for us the weak,
 For us who are without strength.

'When you were without strength,'
 He said, 'When you were unable
 To redeem or enliven yourself,
 Christ came, and
 Crucified through weakness
 He brought great power to the world.
 His was the power to redeem,
 To liberate all enemies,

To revive the dead and bring life
 To the stunned and the shattered,
 To the nerveless ones.
 These shall do great exploits,
 These shall accomplish many things—
 Things gentle and things mighty—
 Provided they live in weakness,
 For in their weakness is their strength
 From my "grace upon grace".'

'Sorrow not,' He said,
 'At the weakness which comes upon you.
 The conies are but a feeble folk,
 Yet they make their houses in the rocks
 And none can defeat them.
 Be strong in the Lord
 And in the power of His might,
 Have no regard for the powers,
 Nor the powers behind them.
 I am the Lord Almighty
 Who wins the hearts of the weak
 And makes them to be very strong.
 "The people who know their God
 Shall stand firm and take action."
 They are the wise ones,
 "And those who are wise
 Shall shine like the brightness
 Of the firmament; and those
 Who turn many to righteousness,
 Like the stars for ever and ever".'

'Lord, then,' we cry, 'We shall be strong
 In the power of Your might.
 We shall do valiantly. We shall lift up
 The hands that hang down

And strengthen the knees
 That ever were feeble.
 We shall concentrate
 On the conies of the rocks,
 And on the great Rock in a weary land.
 We shall look afresh
 At the Rock of Golgotha,
 Shall know in our spirits Your Spirit of power.
 We shall be renewed like the eagle,
 By You who Father us down to old age.'

Ah! Little army,
 The small among the great,
 The feeble among the strong,
 The weak among the mighty,
 Only be strong and of good courage,
 Only take refuge in the mighty Rock,
 But go forth in the word of the Cross
 And in Christ crucified—
 The power of God and the wisdom of God.
 Never fear: devils shall flee in fear
 Before those who know their God,
 Who have come to know Him by that Cross,
 And then in, and then through it
 By constant proclamation.
 In the end the weary shall be refreshed.
 In the end they shall be strong
 With an everlasting strength.
 These were the weak people,
 God's little conies,
 But now His sons made strong
 At the last, and forever.

Where Conies Dwell

THE FEEBLE PEOPLE

I CAN remember in the hot days in Baluchistan where there are many rocks—volcanic, basaltic—that I would watch the tiny rabbits that first peeped out from their household crannies, and then emerged. They are not at all like the great buck rabbits of my own Australian countryside, but so small that I thought they could not be rabbits at all. This part of south-eastern Pakistan seemed to be thick with the little creatures. It made me remember early days in our marriage down the South Coast of New South Wales at a place called Woodhill. Then I would sometimes stand on the back verandah of our country house and aim a light-calibre rifle at the milling rabbits that seemed like a thick moving carpet over the green kikuyu grass of our hillside paddock. One scarcely had to aim in order to hit one of the small beasts. How often we had rabbit for the evening meal—fried, stewed, roasted, as we willed—and how delicious it was until we could scarcely look another rabbit meal in the face.

Here—in Baluchistan it was different—for it was almost impossible to catch one of the little creatures, and if you had, then what sort of a meal could you

have from one of them?! Even so, they were interesting, and I would watch them as the hot sun soaked into me and made me come near to dozing. Moving little forms which at a strange sound would suddenly vanish into the rock holes. One day a hazy memory came to me, something about 'The conies are a feeble people', and so I looked it up. Sure enough it was there in Proverbs 30:26, 'The conies are but a feeble people, yet make they their houses in the rocks.' The other day I looked up another translation. It said, 'The rock rabbits, a race with no defences, yet they make their home in the rocks'.

'The rock rabbits'—what a fascinating statement! How tiny these creatures, how defenceless yet scarcely anyone could get to them. Our Australian rabbits—originally imported from England—can be said to be one of the greatest curses of the land. I can still see them in plague proportions, but they too were cunning—never careless. The old buck rabbit would hear the motions of someone coming and would beat the ground with his strong thumping hind legs, And in a moment all rabbits would pause. Another thump and they would be off into their burrow-refuges, down long twisting tunnels, safe from predators.

Often the old statement about the conies has come to me—'the conies are a feeble people'. I have looked at history and seen that the Christians are a feeble people. Oh, yes! they have had their hours of greatness. They have built great edifices, splendid cathedrals, monasteries of artistic architecture, and have accumulated the massive treasures of fine art, literature—scrolls and ancient volumes—and music that haunts whilst it edifies and inspires, yet behind

all of this outward achievement is a little people, a small, feeble people, which at times is the scorn of great cultures, and the object of their ridicule. Only when the church emulates the politicking and warring of its enemies does it achieve like success with them. Left to themselves they are a little people.

The feeble people have inherited a great portion from the community from which they derived—another congregation of conies, the *qahal* or congregation of Israel. What a puny people were they! In Goshen of Egypt they grew up as a separate race, being subjected to slavery, their muscles and minds being tightened by the terror of their captors. Shepherds by trade, they were forced to make bricks, and their forced labour built them bodily and put iron in their souls. Even so, matched with the magnificent Egyptian army they were nothing. Chariots with cutting blades set in their hubs, fine trained chargers of horses could roll over and crush them. They knew they had to work, even to make bricks without the straw they had once been permitted to use.

They scarcely knew it when Moses—'a proper child'—was born and saved from the slaughter that came to all male children. Unthought of by them, he grew up, being trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but his blood-ties with his people proved too much and he slew an unjust Egyptian slave-master. He escaped at the age of forty into the backside of the Sinai desert and there grew as tough as any elusive cony. At the age of eighty he was commissioned to bring his people out of Egypt—and he did! He did it by God's power, but what a flock of conies they were who often wanted to scuttle back to their Egyptian habitation and take up the relief of just being slaves once more! This cony-like people

needed forty years of fashioning to enter the land God had promised to their patriarch Abraham.

As they entered the land, the inhabitants felt their hearts melt with the fear. Yahweh—the Most High God—has a way of using conies rather than kings. Suddenly conies are strong and fearsome and those who would have destroyed them now flee from them. Only when the conies thought themselves to be something did the danger come again; only when they forgot the principle which Daniel was to record later, ‘the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action’. In the ultimate it is the meek who shall inherit the earth. Moses, they said, was the meekest man on all the earth. But then even he exploded from his meekness into excessive anger—against the very conies whom he loved and for whom he was prepared to die.

Down through the centuries the Israelites alternated between being warriors who decimated their enemies, and fools who grew weak in their idolatry. ‘Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked’, it was once written of Israel. The new rulers of Canaan needed no hideout, no rocks into which to scurry. They grew strong as they knew God, and so they did great exploits, but their idolatry sapped the holy morale God had given them. Immorality, greed, loss of justice, and a wild carelessness overtook them as it does all conquering nations who have pride in themselves.

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And, guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!

Will we learn from Israel’s history? Have they fully learned from their own? They are in God’s hand, and many have learned the way of being quietly feeble. God’s plan for them, and their great climax in history will show that the conies of history’s rocks have survived not only the holocaust of a dreadful world war, but the enmity which Christ slew for them at the Cross. In that day the conies will come out of their holes, and they shall be valiant and do great exploits.

This rambling essay has a purpose in it. It is to show that the use of the term ‘worm’ for Man who has sinned is not inappropriate. It is correct. Yet man is more than a worm in the earth. He is a glorious creature reflecting the splendour of God when he will, in the cony spirit of humility. It is in this spirit of meekness that he will inherit the earth.

How quickly the early Christians spread across the face of the earth. How wonderfully they succeeded when they were simple, when they did not shape weapons such as their ungodly neighbours used. They did not fight the sword but endured it, taking its very thrust in their martyrdom. They were meek upon the face of the earth. ‘This is a time for the patience and endurance of the saints’, God taught the people oppressed by the Beast. Often when they began to get above themselves they would remember the words of Paul who told them he was the weakest man upon all the earth. He would say to his converts,

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the

world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.'

Once Paul had seen such glories that the very memory of them could turn him to terrible pride, and he was given 'a stake in the flesh'. He said,

And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

'When I am truly a cony, a feeble person, then am I a lion. Then can I do exploits for God, so God keeps me in the place of weakness and humility.' This is how we ought to pray. 'Despise not the conies for they are strongest in the end', should be a sort of maxim for us. Yet, if we were to leave it there we might have a lopsided view of weakness. True weakness is undefeatable strength. The history of the church is that when it became wealthy, landed, played power-politics, and sought to sway nations to be loyal to it, and did not primarily lead them to God and His great holy love, then the power they knew became a torment to them. Islam arose at one point of history to decimate such churches. At other times the church has foundered because it has taken up

the philosophies and idolatries of its day, has set its sails to the prevailing wind, has absorbed the mores of its changing culture, and has done horse-trading—so to speak—with a people which refuses to know the true God.

Often the church has been dreadfully mistaken. It has turned its pruning hooks into spears and its ploughshares into swords. Yet its Master was 'crucified through weakness', and 'gave his back to the smiters'. Being reviled he reviled not again, but committed himself to Him who judges righteously. Only a Cross can transform the peoples of the world: God is so weak He needs to use that Cross! *What humans see as weakness is really the heart of God's power.* The camp of God faces the might of Gog and Magog, and is threatened with annihilation, but the fire of God comes from heaven and destroys the enemies. God is on the side of the conies. It is 'the Lamb-as-it-had-been-slain' who breaks the scrolls of the sealed book and displays its mysteries to the world, by which all evil is finally defeated.

'The meek shall inherit the earth', and they shall also inherit the heavens. In the ultimate the battle is not to the strong, but to the weak—God's weak. Be encouraged little conies: your history is one not only of survival, but of taking on the eternal glory and ruling the world as a Kingdom of priests unto God and all creation!

The Old Lag

FRANCIS was the one brother who seemed to think about him, to take notice of him. He didn't know why it was that way. Francis had taught him all about birds, about keeping an aviary, about trapping in the bush. This brother had a wire bird trap which had a centre section for the decoy bird, and then six other sections around it for setting as individual traps. Small forked twigs with a cut in each to fit the notching prong that kept the lid open. There was mixed birdseed on the floor of each section, and the trap would be almost hidden in the tall native grass in an open patch of the bush. You waited behind trees until the Sydney Waxbills made their descent with long, shrill whistles. Sometimes Francis would make an imitation whistle with a hard, long leaf plucked from a plant in the bush. In any case his sucking whistle and the decoy bird together would draw a flight of the lovely birds—green they were, with red heads and beaks, and crimson under their tails and soft green on their wings. It was their bright brown eyes, soft and large for a finch that Goddie loved. They would hear the trap flap down hard, and the flutter of the trapped bird. Often they would catch six at a time, and they would hurry home while the birds were fresh and set them free in the aviaries. How shrill they were in their captivity. Alarmed too. They wanted to get back

to their nests. The hens were the most urgent, the cocks the most protesting.

Francis would take him to Paddy's Market in Sydney on Friday nights, and there the variety was immense. Other kinds of firetails, strawberry finches, diamond sparrows, and all of them caught Goddie's heart. There was the high incessant chatter and shrilling of the multi-coloured budgies, and there were parrots of every kind. He could hardly bear the wonder and the sorrow of it. Sometimes he visualised them being set free—the thousands of them—all fluttering up first and resting on the struts and bearers which held up the ceiling, and then—all of the birds—flying through skylights, and making their various ways home—north, south, east and west—to the bush, to the nests, to dug-outs in the mossy, ferny banks. Beautiful diamond sparrows resetting eggs and being free.

It was coming home that often frightened him. They would wander up George Street, and it was the era of the drunks, never not the time of drunks on the late shopping night. The pubs closed at six but the men carried their bottles wrapped in brown paper to make them respectable, but they—the drunks—were never respectable. Francis and Goddie would not turn off into Goulburn Street, although Goulburn was the home of their birth. There were Chinese and other foreigners who lived down that way. Chinese people—he was told—kept threepences and even sixpences in their ears, so you never sucked coins of that size. They kept to George Street as they worked their way towards Central Railway Station and the panting steam engines, and the smoke-blackened platforms.

If they were in town on a Friday afternoon they had to pass the pubs that would be crowded from after work to six o'clock, the hours when the men were swilling, gulping down their liquor so as to meet the closing time. He would glance fearfully into the hotel interior if a door were open, but mainly to hear the noise and rackets that went on behind closed doors. None of that stopped the sour smell of beer and the wreathed clouds of the smokers from pervading the footpath. These were the days before air-sweeteners, and even if they hadn't been, nothing could have neutralised the stink of sweat and liquor and the smell of cigar and cigarette smoke.

It would be later than closing time when they made their way to Central, and Francis and he would have boot-boxes tied with string and with holes poked in the top so that the birds would have air. Goddie used to keep his eye on the boxes to avoid seeing the drunks. They frightened him. Some of them seemed angry. Some of them had dreams behind their eyes which were nightmares, but the dreams of the slightly inebriated were cheerful enough. The happily inebriated would sing and sing until the paddy wagons took them away to dry out through the night. All this world frightened him. He wondered why it should have to be like this.

What worried him most were the lags, the returned soldiers who had death in their looks, and hands outstretched for money. Francis scarcely looked at them, and Goddie would hasten his steps to keep up with his tall brother. Sometimes the lags would snarl at them, trying to bully them into giving.

Francis told him, 'They go off and get more liquor. Some of them drink methylated spirits flavoured

and coloured with boot polish.' Once Goddie had somehow got a drop of meths on his lips and it had burned and when he swilled his mouth with water it had burned even more. How could they—the lags—drink such things? Francis told his wondering young brother that they had terrible war memories. That further terrified him.

It was their taunts which especially worried him.

'Won't spare a copper for an old Digger?'

'What you made of—stone?'

'Is this all we get for fighting for you? Is this all the thanks?'

'You wouldn't know what we've been through, would you? You wouldn't know about mustard gas and how it has busted us.'

The joy of Paddy's Market would die as they made their way past the World War I beggars. Sometimes there would be an old soldier or two from the Boer War. They all looked out of dead eyes, no matter what had been their war. Goddie wanted to cry. In their respectable North Shore suburb they hardly ever saw a drunk.

But then it was also in the family. At least one of the uncles who had been in the Light Horse was an alcoholic. Things about him were only ever murmured. Dad would never have that uncle in the house.

In the train as they puffed towards their North Shore station, Francis would express his disgust at the drunks. 'Most of them are not returned men,' he would say. 'They are old lags.'

'Old lags!' Goddie did not know what that really meant, but he tried to guess.

'Gone down the drain, they have,' Francis would explain—time and again.

Goddie had seen plenty of pictures in the newspapers of servicemen, and they had albums at home of the uncles who had gone to war. How smart they looked in their army uniforms—solid boots, putted calves, riding breeches, tailored uniforms, and slouched hats. Bandoliers were from belt to shoulder and down the back, and in the front the pouches stacked with .303 rounds. Rifles were slung and bayonets were in scabbards hanging from their waist-belts. He found it hard to reconcile these handsome men with the broken-down derelicts in George Street, unshaven and stinking to high heaven.

When he was older and working in the city in a departmental store he would often meet them in the early morning, unkempt, keeping an eye out for the police but asking for coppers. Sometimes Goddie gave to them out of pity, but they were days of the depression and he had to husband the bit he earned. His problem was that he always felt inferior to these bums. They had fought a war and he hadn't. So he would mostly avert his eyes and hurry on, and the jeers he got from these knowing scroungers hurt all the more. When they became belligerent, he could not get angry. Behind the dereliction he would see something of the original man—the proud soldier.

Then he was in a war himself—the Second World War. He had been trained to believe that all Australian men should join the forces. Only funks didn't. He had some admiration for conscientious objectors because he himself thought war was a tragedy, but the marching, the military bands, the

parade ground training, and his appointment into the ranks of Non-commissioned Officers kept him thinking it was all right. Who would let Hitler and Mussolini come to rule Australia Fair and enslave man, woman and child under a hideous ideology? It was not that he had not thought about these things, and considered them deeply: he had pondered the matter often.

Sometimes he would be surprised to find a First World War Digger in the newly enlisted troops. It seemed they could not keep out of fighting. The idea was ingrained. He suspected some of them were the alcoholics—the winos and metho-drinkers now rehabilitated. He could never be sure, but he heard their jokes: 'All I want to be is a returned soldier,' some of them would say with winks and sly looks. He wondered whether they were taking a respite from being street lags.

Later, when the shells were crashing around them, some of these men kept gasping their surprise. 'We had forgotten,' they said, 'forgotten what it was like in France.' They had to live with past barrages as well as the present. Some paled. Some even grovelled and cried out in horror or babbled like babies and wept. Some went into states of shock—glassy eyes and frozen bodies. He felt sorry for them. In a strange way his spirit exulted in the action. He saw comrades who suddenly showed greatness and bravery beyond ordinary dreams. It was heady doing his work, and it was like transcendent fury leading an infantry charge.

Being a prisoner of war dimmed the lines of memory—both of home, and the war they had just fought. But he found himself thinking on wider fields of ideas than he had known. Something had

happened to him in the fighting which had put fibre into his being, hope for a rich future, and even dreams of greatness for all men. He was no idealist. Nor was he a cynic. A new realism gripped him about life. The lags on George Street—when he occasionally thought of them—were misfits, men who could—and should—have made it better.

No returning troops ever had it more surprising than the returned prisoners of war, what with the ticker tape like paper snow, the streets crowded, bands playing to welcome them home. Thousands lined the roads, hung out of windows from every floor of every building, laughed and shouted, cried and wept. The women boarded the ambulances and kissed the newly uniformed skeletons or the beri-beri-bloated returnees. Ticker tape floated down from all buildings, bunting was hung everywhere, and flags flew proudly on the buildings, or smaller editions were shaken with fervour in the hands of all children and most adults.

If there had been any disgrace in the surrender at Singapore it seemed to be a victory in the eyes of the adoring nation. Goddie felt something had formed itself that day, and set its pattern for all times. For him the bad things were blotted out and community love, such as he had never thought existed, made its proud and tender manifestation.

There was his family also. One brother had been a 'Rat of Tobruk' and then fought in the Pacific Islands. Another had joined a little later and he too had been in landings in the Pacific Islands. Another brother had acted as ground engineer in an Australian airline, spending some of his time in New Guinea.

His eldest brother worked openly as an area manager for the most famous of British Air Lines and received an M.B.E. at the end of the war for cloak-and-dagger work. He had also been made a Vice-consul in an African Country—further coverage for his Intelligence work. Then there was a sister who enlisted in the Land Army.

All the time he was away his family thought of him and prayed for him, and one of the brothers in the Pacific sphere of war vented his anger on the Japanese who became prisoners of war in his area. Altogether Goddie emerged from the war with a sense of the dignity of being a service man. Whining Diggers on George Street—down-and-out winos—had no part in his thinking. He intensely disliked the idea of lags. He was reluctant to take advantage of the offer the Repatriation Department was making in terms of rehabilitation in education or the setting up of his farm. He had a hidden dread of ever becoming a lag.

Living in civilian street became a thing of quiet pride for him. Marriage was sweeter than he had believed possible. Life with his wife and the children they bore was richer than he had dreamed possible. His years in the Army had been only six out of all his other years. He liked his work. He admired many he met, made friends of a few and acquaintances of others. Sometimes he had to go to the Repatriation Hospital for tests, and sometimes for surgical operations. He was always treated with respect. He had a small pension for a disability, but it was just one element of his income. He took it gladly, but was far from dependent on it. When he was of the age to receive a War Service Pension he felt no taste for it. He

worked on as he had always done: he felt fit. In an interview with an orthopaedic specialist he was told he must have what is called 'an osteotomy'. This means that a leg which had become bowed through partial paralysis and over-use had to be cut below the knee—both bones, tibia and fibula—and straightened out. He would be in plaster for some months. The thought dismayed him a little but the pain of arthritis in the knee made him agree to the surgery.

Occasionally he had had to be hospitalised, but this time he was put in an old ward which was large and had wood and glass partitions, and the men were bedded in its four different sections—eight beds to each section. A kind of dismay gripped him on the first day. For the most part the ward seemed to be a place of celebration. There were transistor radio sets working on favourite programs. The place seemed to be in a hubbub of noise. Friends visited patients at almost any time. He had to try to shut off the sound, and settle back to read the books he had brought with him, or to do the writing he had planned to do.

His surgeon visited him with gentle concern, telling him about the operation, how he would be anaesthetised, how his leg would be placed in plaster, and how he would fare in the days immediately following his operation. With him were two women he took to be new nurses or medical undergraduates. He was wrong. They were doctors, and he could not believe they were. In an uneasy way he found he could not trust them. They were frivolous, even in the presence of the surgeon. He thought he could feel their distaste for this kind of orthopaedic ward. Perhaps they thought it to be all too social, not having enough of the authentic ward atmosphere

about it. In that he was wrong: they liked the conviviality of the ward, but they had no time for the older men.

When the surgeon had gone they examined him and left him. He watched them laughing, joking and even flirting with the younger servicemen. He was shrewd enough to see why they had no time for the older men. It dawned on him, gradually, that these older men were regarded as lags. During army and prisoner of war days he saw few men he would have classified as potential lags. Perhaps some of the older men were making demands upon the Repatriation Department which he would not have made, but he could not judge them. So far as he could sense, these older men had retained their personal dignity. It made him feel a sense of pride in their history.

When he returned from the operating theatre a patient of his own age had read the medical file which he had taken from the foot of Goddie's bed.

He looked at Goddie. 'It says, "This patient is in danger," ' but could not make out what was the cause or form of danger. Goddie worried about that for a while and then thought the other patient had perhaps read it wrongly, yet it was shortly after that he knew there was something wrong. Something oddly wrong.

He had no sense of appetite but put that down to the recent anaesthetic, and the needles and tablets to kill his pain. His bedside locker was filled with gifts of sweets and chocolates that his wife, his family and visiting friends had brought with them. He had no taste for them. Indeed, a deep nausea was gripping him. He talked with different sisters, but nothing was being done about his complaint. He asked that

his surgeon might see him, but either the message did not get to him, or he could not come.

The two young women doctors did their daily rounds in their customary, light-hearted way. He tried to communicate his problem. All they did was to get him out of bed, help him to crutches and ordered him to perambulate around the ward. Waves of faintness and nausea would pass over him, but he pressed on, gritting his teeth and trying to fulfil their demands.

What he sensed most about them was their lack of sensitivity to the humanity of their patients. Perhaps they were a bit heady about their position as doctors—even if they were virtually novices. He had spotted the fact before—that they considered all older men to be lags of a kind, and his mind gagged on the thought, especially as he realised they had included him in this category.

That night his wife Edna came, and she was disturbed by his appearance. She spoke to the sister in the duty room, but they didn't think there was much to worry about. His own general practitioner came to visit him, and he was plainly worried. He asked the name of the surgeon. Then one of his close friends visited him, a man who was a surgeon lecturing at the nearby University Medical Centre. He went to the duty room and said some words. Nothing seemed to come of this intercession. He supposed it was the lag syndrome that made them think he was 'putting it on'.

Next morning he could eat no food. Nor could he get out of bed for the daily compulsory walk. The day wore on to the early afternoon. Waves of nausea were sweeping over him. Terrible pain was in his

chest, and then—perhaps where his lungs were located—he felt something awful was happening. He asked a nurse to send the ward sister and she came, cheerfully enough. She looked at him, asked some questions and sent for a barouche. She detailed an orderly to take him to the X-ray department. The orderly delivered his papers to the department and returned to the ward, leaving him unattended. He was left outside, awaiting room to fit him in the clinic.

It was then the pain intensified. So much so, that he wondered whether he could bear it. He watched the X-ray staff depart one by one. No one seemed to notice him, or to hear his gasping. He tried to get into a comfortable position but the heavy weight of his plastered leg prevented that.

Then he heard a voice. It was one of his college students who was working in the hospital as a ward orderly.

'What are you doing here, sir?' the voice asked.

He told him. 'Waiting for an X-ray.'

The young man looked alarmed. 'You are in a bad way,' he said, and he rushed through the swinging doors. All the staff but one had left, and this last radiologist was just about on her way. The young man said something, and, alarmed, she had him bring in the surgical patient. She set up the plates and took pictures of his chest.

When they were developed she went into spasms of further alarm. She rang through to the ward, and within minutes he was being wheeled back into the ward and placed on a bed close to the duty room. By this time he was sweating profusely and shafts of pain were shooting through his body. They were giving him needles, and oxygen, and a saline drip. They

played a fan on his sweating body. The ward sister was extremely solicitous.

'I really don't know how you got like this,' she said. 'This is preposterous.'

He could have said a few things, but he kept silent.

They had rung through to his wife and she came bustling in, and being an old sister herself, she was shocked at his appearance. In a flash she was at the telephone, and shortly afterwards his local G.P. and his surgeon friend showed up. Since the surgeon was one of the Senior specialists at the same hospital, the staff deferred to him.

He would have nothing but a quick transference of the patient to the University Medical Centre.

He said, 'There he can have a nuclear scan.' He looked at the sister with some anger and disgust. 'That is, if he makes it there.'

They transferred him gently to a barouche, the surgeon all the time watching that he—the patient—did not make a move.

'You have massive emboli,' he said.

It seemed like an eternity before the ambulance arrived, and all the time the ward sister attended him, making sure his oxygen and tubes were working.

At the Medical Centre they handled him very gently. When he went to transfer himself from the barouche his surgeon friend told him to lie still.

'One move, and you could be dead,' he said. His face was grim, but his eyes were sympathetic. They lifted him in the sheet he was on, settling him on the bench of the nuclear scanner.

After the nuclear scan they took him to a ward. He wondered why they were not returning him to the other hospital.

'That's impossible,' the surgeon said. 'You will have to recover here.'

He felt extremely tired, and, under some drug they had given him, began to drift off. The last sight he had was his wife looking at him tenderly, and the surgeon nodding in his usual way of encouragement.

When he woke in the morning the word 'lag' was in his mind. He wondered why. Then he remembered the two insouciant young doctors, and their utter disregard for the old returned men. By some strange association of thought he was back in George Street Sydney, just north of Paddy's Market, and his brother Francis was carrying a shoe-box, tied with string and with holes in the top to give the birds a bit of air. He could see the old lags coming towards him with hands outstretched, and one was saying, 'Got a coin for an old Digger, mate?' and he could feel the smell of wine from his breath.

For a moment rage rose up in him, and he thought of the indignity the feckless young doctors had brought on him and others in the ward. Then he wondered why he was angry. His wife was looking at him with some concern, and he felt his anger die away. Long ago he had learned how fickle is humanity, as he had also learned how rich in dignity it can be.

His wife held his hand, and her look was tender. He was grateful for the dignity they had both given each other over the years. He supposed—ungrudgingly—that the two doctors would eventually learn a sense of the richness of the humanity with which they dealt. He felt sorry for the George Street lags, even though they had moved down the sloping

grade of Skid Row. Behind their failure he could still see something of dignity, like an old castle that has become derelict, but shows—tragically enough—the original grandeur of its bygone years.

Visitors came, but were unable to see him. Cards and fruit and gifts of sweets and chocolates were left for him. Flowers were everywhere. Only very close friends were admitted and their intimacy was sweet. His children showed their love in compassionate ways. A great vase of flowers was brought by a florist's messenger, and there was a large card attached.

In it was the message from the Veterans' Hospital. 'From the patients and Staff of the Ward. Get well quick. We miss you. Love from us all.' The ward sister had signed it personally.

At first he could not believe his eyes. He even felt a little indignant, and then a wave of shame flushed over him.

He said to himself, but as though speaking to them, 'You never knew. You just never knew.'

He was weak, but they told him the worst was over. He would soon be well. He lay back, his hand still in that of his wife and felt a great peace steal over his body and mind and spirit. He was thinking of lags, and irresponsible medical graduates, and a busy ward where everyone was occupied about this and that, and he supposed that this was what they all called 'life'.

'Considering all things,' he said to himself, 'it isn't all that bad—this life.' He found himself feeling sorry for the lags, and even sorry for the doctors. He just wished discernment would come to them very soon, and that they would give dignity to all men and women, everywhere. Somehow this experience

had settled the matter of lags. Somehow he felt pity for the doctors, and no anger at all—no anger for anyone.

*I Love Through Love:
I Love Him*

He is my Father. I love Him.
He made the round world and all they
That dwell within.
He made the sheer blue sky
And the clouds that often dapple it.
He made Mankind in beauty
And clothed him with His image.
I love my Father. He redeemed me
And all the people of God.

I love my Saviour. He's my Lord.
No matter where I walk—
Even in the shadowed valley—
He is with me. He always was,
And became Emmanuel,
Forever flesh with me,
And for me. For us all.
I love my Elder Brother.
I desire always
To be in his likeness.

I love my Holy Spirit. The Dove
Descends on winds of smoking silver,
On pinions of silver glory.
He is the one who gives breath to all,

And brings Father and Son to dwell
In my innermost being.
I am one with him,
And he with me. I love him,
Since he brings love to me,
From the Father, and through the Son.
I love the blessed Spirit.
I love the Three-in-One.

I love all creatures and all things
That come from Him, that go to Him.
I love His fragrance rich on them.
I know His love for them
Though they requite it not
Until that love enralls
In sudden revelation.
So the round world He made
And all therein, I love.
I love the mystery,
The fact that I can love
With love that loves me.

I love the Triune majesty.
I love the Eternal dignity.
I love the high sounds
That swirl round the throne,
And make their descent on me.
I love the arms that draw me high,
The eyes that gaze into my gaze
Unfaltering to bring me near
And hold me ever dear
To Them, to Him. I love
The encircling of the Eternal Love.

The God Who Acts

AN ESSAY ON THE LIVING GOD

Tidings of Great Joy

IT WAS that night when the shepherds were in the fields, keeping watch over their sheep. Suddenly—though not anticipated—the glory of the Lord shone around them. That most wonderful fear that comes to us as humans when God Himself breaks into the normal routine of our lives gripped these men whose chief matter in life was to care for sheep.

We can see them falling to the ground before that great and holy glory. In the midst of that glory there was an angel, the great angel of Israel's history, for he was, at once, both the angel of the Lord—a manifestation of Yahweh Himself—and the angel of Israel, the protective and guiding angel of the ancient shepherd-people, the angel who had appeared as God to them so many times, had guided them through the wilderness, for 'in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, he [had] lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.'

By this same angel God was—in past times—to give them the most holy law out of his own bosom,

at Sinai where they would tremble in awe and reverent fear. He was to be with them in their battles and in their great triumphs.

He was to be the hand of the living God, moving in protective covenant action.

What must have struck them so powerfully that night was that God had not forsaken His ancient covenant people. Bitter it had been to be taken away from their land amidst excruciating cruelty and so made to be strangers in foreign places. Even when the miracle of the return had taken place, when the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple had happened, there were still the invasions of the defiling invaders. How they had longed for the inviolable peace of Jerusalem.

Now—to their great joy—was the Lord in their midst.

The angel said, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.'

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!'

Emmanuel

The great joy to Israel was that God was with them. He had come to them, personally, assuring them He was in their midst.

He had come as Emmanuel—'God with us!'

He had come in the form of a babe.

The Babe would grow, and become a man, moving

amongst God's holy people, showing them that God had not forsaken them, that indeed He was with them. This would be great joy to them.

They were to see God in love and pity as He again redeemed them, only this time—forever!

They would see their God come to the guilty and the lost, to those gripped by guilt, haunted and oppressed by the devil—the plaything of demons. They would see the sick and the leprous, the bewildered and the sinful, and they would see His hand upon them not only in pity but in liberating mercy, for His people were to be a joyous people.

They would also see the great event of the Cross, although at the point of its happening they would not understand it—so shameful it would seem. Their anger and rage at God would break out in the event of the Cross as a sign to the whole world of its bitterness against God.

The Resurrection, however, would bring God's true people to marvel. Their joy would be unbounded as salvation poured out to them from the sheer grace of God.

God on the Move

That is how it happened. Suddenly from heaven came the marvellous outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. In hours, thousands came flowing into the Kingdom of God. The timid group of fishermen had become as holy lions and roared out the proclamation of redemption. God was with them. Emmanuel had come, and had been taken from their sight to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on High, but he had not departed from them—his servants. He was to remain with them until the present age

would come to its consummation. He was still 'Emmanuel'.

History, now, was to be in the hands of Jesus its Lord. High over all great powers and authorities he was to reign supreme. And so he now reigns supremely.

This they did by 'words and deeds, by the power of signs and wonders and the power of the Holy Spirit'.

Yet at times they ask, 'Is he indeed high above all? Does he truly reign by the authority of the Father? Has he indeed triumphed over all the forces of darkness?'

They ask this when thousands of them are butchered because of his Name. They ask it when the Sanhedrin denounces those first apostles, when their beloved Stephen is murdered, when James their companion is put to death. They ask it as they wander the earth, telling out the good news, but being imprisoned for it. They ask this in the face of the bitter persecutions of the first few centuries, the later persecutions in the many lands which they invade. They ask it in the face of persecution which takes place against them in the Name of their very Lord!

They ask it in the face of the savage and murdering Islamic hordes, erasing the people of Christ from Arabia and North Africa. They ask it when the Turks decimate the Armenian Christians in a hideous genocide. They ask it in countries overrun by pagans, by butchering monarchs, by wild tribes. They ask it in the face of a persecuting medieval church, and of traditional churches which would confine worship and the Scriptures to a powerless traditionalism, and a church so often at ease, dead when it knows it not, and is cold in its formality and lovelessness.

Sometimes they cry from under the altar—the martyred saints of God—‘Lord! When will be avenged our blood upon them?’ They are told to wait a little longer until the roll of the martyrs is completed, until the Gospel is preached to every nation, for only then will the end come.

It is not in cynicism they cry, for they know their God is the living God. He is long-suffering and of great kindness. Men and women can count His long-suffering as salvation, for He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

He has always been long-suffering, and of great kindness since He loves the world He created. Long before time He had planned its redemption. He had planned it should be delivered from the curse that came upon it through the sin of man. He had planned His elect people should be holy and blameless before Him having become His sons through grace.

He had planned that He—the living God— should dwell in the midst of His people, they being His holy habitation, the true Holy City, the place of perpetual worship, glory and joy.

He had planned all this because He was ever—and is ever—the living God.

The Living God

From Him flows all life, hence the singers cried, ‘All our springs are in you!’ The prophets said, ‘[He is] the fountain of living waters!’ Others simply said, ‘He is the living God! In Him we live and move and have our being, but in us—a person and a people—He lives and moves and has His Being!’

They meant, ‘Our God does not hide Himself. He is not bound by the universe he has created. He is not cut off from action by the laws He has set for His creation. Whenever He wishes, and in accordance with His most Holy Self of love, goodness, holiness, righteousness and truth, He acts as He wills. He acts according to His eternal wisdom, never faltering. He fulfils all things according to the counsel of His own will, and nothing may prevent that. He is not locked *into* His own creation so that He is bound by it. Nor is He locked *out* of that creation, so that He cannot be in it at His own will.’

He is the living God!

The Living Lord of All History

So we see Him, moving in our times and our places. He moves in creating His most beautiful universe. He gives signs in the sun, moon and the stars. He shapes Man in his own image. He gives warm living intimacy to the man and the woman. He tests them at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but is not dismayed by their fall. He pronounces coming salvation—defeat to the Enemy and liberation to the men and women of faith. This He will achieve by the seed of the fallen woman!

He gives grace to the first murderer, and does not destroy him, though such may be deserved. He creates a prophet-martyr of the murderer’s brother. He watches the growing corruption and violence until He must act in the judgement of the Flood. He promises uninterrupted rhythm of seasons—seedtime and harvest. He takes an idolater and makes Him the father of many nations and many people, and gives him the ultimate covenant of grace. He

comes in the person of His own angel, and speaks and converses with this—His humanity, His people for a possession.

He acts in accordance with His own covenant of grace and delivers His people from the oppressor—Egypt—and does this with mighty signs and wonders.

His people—scarcely recognising Him—wait with mixed fear and joy as ten plagues show Him to be in their midst. They fear Him as the holy God of covenant. They see so much, but think so little concerning Him, though He shows them His presence as He journeys with them in a column of *shekinah* smoke by day, a pillar of *shekinah* brilliance by night.

He is with them in His tabernacle and later in His temple, sitting between the cherubim in the holy of holies. He is with them in the words of their leaders, priests and prophets. He does simple indicative signs along with great signs and wonders, especially in the times of their greatest need. He says continually, 'I am the Lord your God who dwells in your midst.'

Whilst He lives with His holy people He is above all the people of the earth. By Him kings reign, and kings and emperors meet their demise and become senseless dust in the desert. By Him peoples grow, flourish and then wane. His eye is over all the earth. He keeps evil at bay where He will, and uses it as His wholly controlled sheepdog to worry and control the wayward nations.

He comes to Israel in its times of need—need of judgement, need of mercy—and works according to His most perfect will, and always with His covenant in mind.

He comes in His only Son—he who was ever the Eternal Word, the Son by whom He created all

things—and he brings him to dwell in flesh as the True and only Emmanuel—God with them, God with us!

In His piety he redeems not only Israel, but the nations of the world. He moves in intimate detail and act, and brings His world to its most glorious climax, judging evil on the one hand, and fulfilling all righteousness—forever—on the other.

Great God of Wonders!

The hymn writer could not withhold his amazement and—perforce—wrote,

Great God of wonders! All Thy ways
Display the attributes divine;
But countless acts of pardoning grace
Beyond Thine other wonders shine:

Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

This too we ask, when we contemplate the history of creation, the planning of God, His inestimable wisdom, His creative and redemptive purposes. By all these things we know He is the living God—acting according to His own perfect will.

The God of Signs and Wonders and Works of Power

Not even the pagan thinks that his god lacks power. Most, if not all, religions come to this belief—God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. The way they spell out those elements of God determines the forms of their belief.

In fact—apart from superstition and senseless mumbo-jumbo—who really believes God acts per

sonally, warmly and unceasingly within His creation? Some refuse to believe in Him as a personal God. Others see Him as endlessly confronted by evil. Yet others see Him as Creator and even Redeemer but refuse Him personal action within His own creation.

He must remain out of it. He may reign above it, but not be in it. He may—indeed must—control its destiny but not by His presence or His intimacy. The God of the deists is above His creation, having set it in action, predetermining its end, but coldly staying out of its domestic fuss and foolish actions. The God of the atheist—the God who causes this person such endless anger—is close to the God of the deist, but the atheist knows God ought to work at every point of history and in unceasing details. *It is simply that the atheist does not see what God does*, because God does not do it in the way the atheist thinks He ought to act.

The indolent religionist thinks God ought not to be so bothersome—indeed so uncouth—as to enter His own creation. One can never be sure what might not happen, and what might! Besides such irruptions are tiresome. One can never be sure of the order of things! Having set out a ‘fixed order’ He ought—in all decency—to adhere to it. Also such unpredictable actions interfere with the planning of man.

The humanist is as indignant about God as the atheist but he prefers scorn to the atheist’s ‘God obsession’. The miraculous is foolish, and signs and wonders are irrelevant. Man has within himself the power to accomplish all that is needed in order to create his own secular ‘kingdom of God’. If marvels are to be done then let them be real and not the

induced figments of human imagination. Let there be signs and wonders, mighty works and marvels, but let them be done by Man! Even then let them be done in decent and rational ways. They can be done—when they are needed!

The Believer and His Living God

Men of faith have always believed the creation belongs to its Creator. They know He will move in His creation as He wishes.

They thrill with joy when they see Him move in history—not merely as in cause and effect—but as the great Initiator of all things true and moral.

They delight that He should come to them in an angelic form, in rich and wonderful theophanies. They rejoice when He speaks personally through covenant, law and prophecy. They gaze with solemn awe and reverence when He comes in strong prophetic denunciations and clean and decisive judgements.

They view with wonder His judgements of plagues, of signs and wonders, delivering His people but bringing judgements to His intractable opponents. They see these judgements also as forms of mercy, drawing people away from their own evil.

The actions of the living God in history delight them for without those actions they might think He does not care for His creation and its peoples. Revelations of fiery chariots and hosts of heavenly creatures—hitherto veiled but now revealed—fill them with awe and wonder. To them it is as beautiful a thing that God should walk Enoch home with Him as He should take Elijah to Himself in such chariots of glory.

The history of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is part of the history of the everyman of faith. Israel's release from Egypt, its wanderings through the wilderness—all attended by signs and wonders—are not mere encouragements to the people of faith—but very corpuscles of their arterial blood. The world of prophets, priests and kings intimate with God is not a strange world to the people of faith.

The world of Messiah, coming as King of the Kingdom, healing, liberating, doing signs, wonders and works of great power and—above all—declaiming the very word of God Himself—are not beyond the scope of their faith. In these things they delight.

In the days of Pentecost, and the events that followed, the people of faith were the agents of God's signs and wonders and mighty works. They were those who used the holy gifts of Christ and his Spirit and brought liberation to men and women by healings, miracles, liberations, exhortations, admonitions and prophetic revelations.

By works that are holy and good and true, they have honoured the Lord their God, and their ever-present—though presently unseen—Emmanuel. Their worship is undeniably of the nature of truth itself. They adore their Father, worship their Lord, and do it all in the Holy Spirit and the truth He has made real to them. By worship and works they serve the living God. By signs and wonders and gifts they demonstrate and reveal the presence of that living God.

Such people of faith are here upon the earth today. Whilst evil powers mimic the powers of God, and evil forces seek to deceive multitudes into their way—the occultic way—of so-called reality, the true believers live by the word of God, and exercise what

spiritual powers and weapons He has given them. None of this do they do—or ought they do—by their own independent volition. As humble as were the apostles so ought we people of faith to be now. On the one hand we must have no idolatry of power-operations, nor on the other lack of faith in His present actions. As the early believers lived in God, so must we, and only at the point of His urging should we do such deeds and acts as He requires.

The temptation to power is the fall of man relived. Christ was no *macho* deliverer, but one who spent nights in prayer to live intimately in the will of His Father. He gave no *carte blanche* mandate to his servants to 'Go, Get it! Go, do it!' The word was, 'Go . . . and lo! I am with you always!'

A Prayer

Great God of wonders, we do not worship Your acts but You. We do not covet Your gifts, but we love You—the Giver. We do not desire to have greatness and power to heal us from our innate weakness, but we do desire Your power to be seen throughout all the earth. Attest to Your most powerful and saving word by giving Your servants boldness to utter it. Attest to this word by signs and wonders. Keep Your people by Your most gracious gifts. Keep them from pride when You work. Save them from thinking they have done it! Cause all they do to be true worship of Your most holy Being.

Glorify Your name in all the earth, O You who work wonders through the Son who suffered and died, bearing the sins of all, and making intercession for such transgressors.

Jamie MacAlistair—the Full Man

IT IS a strange thing that I should have met Jamie MacAlistair last night for the second time in many years. Strange because our paths had run in much the same lines, although we were different people. I find it a thing most curious that suddenly after all those years have passed we should then meet together and be so intimate, as though we were never otherwise and that the passage of the years should have altered nothing. Of course, we had corresponded, but even that letter-writing had withered away.

Now, as I begin to write this special memoir, memories come flooding like a fresh tide invading the mainland of the mind. Jamie MacAlistair! What a man he was and what a man he has become! It came to me as a rich surprise last night that a man is only fully a man when he has lived his life. Everything has become rounded off, so to speak. Long ago a friend had said to me, 'Denny, it is the last chapter that counts!' I remember I was impressed by his saying at the time, and perhaps thought it did not refer to me so much as to my son. This lad had been through tough times—mainly of his own making, so intense a person was he who would set the world to rights all by his own determination. So the saying

gave me some heart for my son, but I never thought of it applying to others.

Now it has come to apply to Jamie, and—for that matter—to me. No one could be more rounded than Jamie. I find I must write out all my thoughts, for they are too rich and remarkable to let them just be or to let them be 'blowing in the wind' as that strange singer had once said. So I want to tell you about Jamie, and good it is that we share the things of this man.

My first conscious memory of Jamie as a soldier was when we met at the Recruit Receiving Depot—that old Royal Showground at Moore Park in the Sydney of the forties. We had been admitted and allotted to a special hut which was not one of those vast pavilions in which pigs or cows or horses had been housed at Show time. It just happened that our pal-liasses were together. We listened to the RMO as he barked out instructions on how to become soldiers. He seemed to have a bit of contempt for our civilian rawness, but also the confidence that he would make us into functional and fighting men. Jamie's idea was that he would follow his former training as a surveyor apprentice and be admitted to the Survey Corps. I had thought the same, although I scarcely knew what a theodolite was, or how one lived the life of a chain-boy. The Army had decided we should be admitted to the elevated sphere of Divisional Signals, and so it came to pass.

We were both very athletic. That is old history and does not now matter. Then it mattered that we were selected for training as Physical Instructors. There were a hundred and sixty-three of us in the course.

Three days later there were fifty. The others were trying to ease their aching muscles with Sloan's Liniment, or were begging off from all exercises. It seemed no surprising matter to the RMO who had sized us up. He had a good word for us.

'You and MacAlistair,' he said to me, 'are going to make it. Keep at it and you will be corporals in a few days.'

Temporary corporals, of course—not gazetted. Nothing is permanent in RRD. So we got our stripes, much to the envy of some in our huts—especially those who had dropped out of the fierce training. I was posted on duty in Sigs HQ the day 'Sig Toc'—that infamous and amazing Commanding Officer of 8th Divisional Signals—came to select men from our rookie depot. Our old Colonel had told me in grumpy fashion not to be interviewed by Colonel Thyer.

The visiting Colonel picked up MacAlistair as the squads wheeled into the parade ground. He watched the platoons line up in front of the Duty Office. I had been posted at the door. I had to call out the men's names according to the Unit list. Sig Toc had a face as hard as granite, and eyes that pierced when you looked straight at him. I kept my eyes averted so that we would have no personal communication.

He had commerce with MacAlistair. I saw a gleam of recognition in his eyes. 'Signalman MacAlistair,' he said, 'where did you learn your marching?'

'In the Boys' Brigade, sir,' MacAlistair said, his eyes strictly looking ahead. A faint grin appeared on the Colonel's face, and then I saw him tick his list. MacAlistair was in. He would be out of RRD in no time, and maybe overseas before you could think. I felt a tremor of envy, but remembered the Old Man's

words. 'Don't even let him talk to you,' he had told me.

MacAlistair was jubilant that evening, and I felt my envy grow. Also I was sorry I was going to miss out on his friendship. We had stuck together in the days of initiation. Next morning finished the recruitment event. The blue-eyed Colonel was running his finger down the list. Having finished he looked up at me.

'Corporal,' he said.

I jumped to attention. 'Yes, sir?' I answered.

'What is your name?' he asked me. He had motioned me to stand in front of the desk.

'Denny Travers, sir,' I said. He looked at the list and then up at me.

'I don't find your name here,' he said. He looked hard at me and then said quietly, 'Why isn't your name here?'

I blushed at that. He stared keenly. 'Well, come on,' he said.

'Colonel Craven said I was not to go on the list. He said he had something else for me.'

Again the faint grin that he had given a recruit or two during interviews.

'I suppose you want to stay in Australia,' he said, 'and be part of the staff at this RRD.'

I scarcely hid my anger at his words, and just shook my head, not trusting I would say the right words.

'Would you like to join me?' he asked and something strange happened within me. I had been told this man was one of the most ruthless of officers, and here I was wanting to go with him to the ends of the earth.

I stammered a yes, and felt confused, and heard

him telling me I would lose my stripes, but maybe it wouldn't be long before I got them back permanently. Suddenly I was seeing life take on new and rich meaning.

Colonel Craven didn't think it was funny. I later heard that all in our hut were marked off for OTC—Officers' Training Camp. It was strange that Jamie and I never got our pips, but then that didn't matter.

At the Bathurst Training Camp Jamie and I were put in the same hut, and were allotted to the same Signal Section which was marched up and down for hours, right-wheeled, left-wheeled, about-turned, halted, stood to attention then commanded to stand easy, and then was marched afresh, and made to wait around for hours so that our autonomous civilian spirits were broken of their bad habits. We did twenty-five mile route-marches and bivouacs, camping in the freezing nights of the Western plains. We fossicked around Captain's Flat for specks of gold, and then were admitted into the training for our 'Don R' licences. The machines were Nortons and BSAs: 'Beezers' we called the latter. We were both given corporal's stripes, learned a bit how to be above the signaller level, and yet be one with them.

Suddenly we were boarding the *Queen Mary* and were off to a destination unknown, although it was rumoured that Malaysia was our destination. I was disappointed at the news because I had a brother in the Middle East—one who was to be a 'Tobruk Rat'. I would have liked to have been with him. He was Infantry: I was Signals.

Jamie and I had to give Physical Training daily to hundreds of men. We all wore shorts and sandshoes

and singlets, and there was no insignia of rank. Jamie and I had a great time shouting at men we knew to be officers, making them double up, and criticising them for being sloppy. In our cabin we chuckled, especially as some officers begged out from our training.

It was at night we had our best times. Often we would pull rank—little as it was—and go up forward to watch the great prow cut its silver way across the silent Indian Ocean. We said scarcely a word, wondering whether U-Boats would surprise us. Our guns seemed so tiny, and we knew a magnetic mine could finish either us or some of the escort Naval vessels. Those silver nights full of silent moonlight imprinted themselves on us. It is now I think about them afresh.

Singapore was a surprise—its humid heat and the thousands of Tamil and Chinese coolies that lined up to welcome us and shift gear from the *Queen Mary*. We had no time to see the city but were quickly packed into the sooty steam trains, making our way through the night, and rattling our way through beautiful country—rubber-plantations, jungles and rare patches of pineapple country.

Jamie and I loved Port Dickson, and the beautiful coastline with its long, white sandy beaches with their leaning tropical palms, and the gentle Chinese girls who seemed no closer than the Moslem young women—the latter being shepherded by their stern fathers and shapely mothers. Port Dickson and nearby Seremban were fascinating by night, especially in the marketplace with petrol lamps flaring and hissing, masses of tropical fruit, rolls of gaudy cloth, delicate pewter, shining brassware and other tourist objects. We snapped rolls of film, wrote letters

to cure homesickness, and waited for what was to happen.

One of the things that happened was a long river trip on bamboo rafts that we made with our own hands under Malayan tuition. We spent all one day, a whole night, and part of the next day travelling on this organised bivouac—some of it through virgin jungle. Jamie and I were on the same raft, and the vines that held the raft together became worn on the rocks in the rapids, and our raft fell apart like a great fan, swinging out against the strong flowing of the river. Down went our rifles and cameras and packs. We floundered about, recovering gear and moving towards the bank where we cut more vines and fastened the poles together.

That night we stayed near the river. We could not sleep with the noises of the jungle, the massive squadrons of mosquitoes that attacked us, and some slime off trees that set our whole bodies prickling. In the early morning we were off and made our way to the set destination. We were grateful to be eating a good breakfast on the beach, rubbing salve on our painful bodies, piling into Army trucks and on our way back to far-off Port Dickson.

Then came the move to Mersing on the south-east coast, and we made our way down the Peninsula under the leadership of world-famous motorcycle rider—Aub Lawson. Jamie and I had 'Beezers' and we made the most of them. We had a certain freedom from convoy regulations. We stopped off for bananas, mangoes and sweet pineapples.

At Mersing we helped lay a system of signal cables to link the special fortifications that the ASC, Engineers, Infantry and Artillery were establishing. Jamie was in a wireless truck, and we had a cable-lay

ing machine we had invented and made. We spewed miles of communication cable out from the roadside, avoiding the crazy civilian trucks driven by mad Indians and Malays. It was in the middle of one night and in the heart of the jungle that we heard news—on our phones—of the Japanese moving down the coast of Thailand. This was prior to Pearl Harbour. Suddenly we were at war.

For our cable team it meant keeping up communications from Mersing to Endau—some twenty-six miles away. Japanese Zero fighters would swoop on us from nowhere, and without sufficient ack-acks we were defenceless. Here and there machine-gun fire would cripple a plane, and even cause it to crash, but life had to be lived under cover of jungle or rubber trees.

Jamie and I scarcely saw each other as we travelled down in 'planned strategic withdrawal' to the Johore Straits and across the Causeway. So rapidly did our troops move that the Japanese had difficulty in catching up. There was nearly a day's break for us to get a little sleep and set ourselves up to hold the mighty fortress of Singapore Island. All the world knows the great 36-inch guns were trained out to sea, and the enemy came not from the sea but from the north, down the Malayan Peninsula, hemming us in on the Island whose oil tanks by this time were burning, sending off smoke and blackening faces and clothing until we could scarcely recognise one another.

Jamie and his wireless truck were down towards the shores of the Straits and we were laying line to the machine-guns of the Second-Fourth. If I pause in memory for a moment I can hear their machine-guns hammering away trying to stave off the yellow hordes coming in on the landing barges,

wrist-compasses set towards a special village, Ama Keng, if I remember correctly. I watched the men of the 2/4th MGs standing firm, and the Brens spitting death to the Nipponese who pitched screaming into the restless Straits. And still they came.

Jamie later told me they had backed away and actually crossed the Japanese line as they pressed towards the village. We heard them on our left screaming 'Banzai! Banzai' in their guttural voices, and everywhere there was the sound of live ammunition. Most of it was crackers that crackled away like machine-gun fire. Then I heard a new note in the machine-gun fire. This time it was a relentless, endless yammering, and it made your blood run cold.

The night our Brigade Headquarters was attacked I remember a terrible fever gripped me. I shivered with the ague, teeth chattering, cold sweat pouring off me. We were on one side of a lake—or was it a dam? Then we heard protesting quacking of the ducks and knew the Japanese were encircling us. It was the ducks who helped to save us. The training of the Sydney RRD and the Bathurst Camps was a far cry from that strange night. I remember rebuking a company of Indians—those of a Sikh Regiment—and one of them lunged towards me with his bayonet, only to have it deflected by an officer. He told me cheerily that Indians were great when victory was assured, but changed terribly when it wasn't.

There wasn't much victory about. Some of us plunged forward to where we could hear the dreadful sound of the yammering machine-gun. They used lighter ammunition than our rounds, but the impact was startling, as I soon discovered. Almost on top of them and firing in the direction of the machine-gun nest I heard a last stutter of the

machine, and then I toppled, my right leg badly smashed. I lay on the black ribbon of the road whilst the cries of my fellow-soldiers and the cries of the Japanese drifted into the distance.

Somewhere else Sergeant Jamie MacAlister and his team were sending the last messages they would transmit in that truck. A mortar hit the side of it, and in a moment it was ablaze. The team found themselves running until they missed Jamie. Rushing back they found him trying to drag along a smashed leg. Even as I write this I think how uncanny it was that we were both wounded in a leg, even if his was the left one and mine the right.

When they got to Brigade Headquarters they saw personnel prepared to quit. Our machine-gun charge had given them precious time. As the Japanese were on one of their rare retreats HQ marshalled itself, withdrawing to a predetermined point. My own Cable Section had veered away from where I was, and I lay until the first light of dawn, leg smashed, blood almost expended, scared to move lest a sniper finish me: scared to use my own rifle on myself lest I might make a horrible mess. My pistol lay beneath me, pressing into my side, and I did not dare to appear other than dead.

When the boys came to take me up I fainted for a moment, was frozen cold, and then felt the horror of the pain as it began its fierce work again. We were a mass of bodies in that Ford utility, banging and clattering our way towards an improvised Army hospital. They took Jamie into Singapore and me to Gilman Barracks opposite the Princess Alexandra Hospital, where—within a day or so—drug-laden Koreans were to burst in and annihilate everyone without mercy.

Such memories never die. Old soldiers may fade away, but not their memories—not whilst they still live. The heat, the rocking of the buildings, the rolling of the leg in a platform splint, the one cup of fluid a day in the midst of a raging thirst, and the pain unabating—these are potent memories.

When I began this story my intention was to minimise the early days of our friendship, and get on to the substance of what happened in prison days and the time following in civilian life, but then how can we understand Jamie unless we know what he went through on that journey to the hospital—Fullerton Building near the GPO, and improvised from business offices into hastily arranged wards? Patients lay on the concrete uncomplainingly for hours; many without morphia and some already flyblown in their wounds. So it is in all wars. It does not matter greatly but yet it does something to the spirit of men, either crushing them with its anguish or awakening the most amazing moral and psychic reserves.

When I was taken from the Gilman Barracks to Fullerton Building, Jamie and I found ourselves in a sort of annexe. Nine of us with broken limbs, legs set in splints or plaster, and hearing the endless groanings of the badly wounded. Some did not groan, thinking that it betrayed an inner weakness. Nurses—both male and female—moved busily amongst us. I remember the morphia most of all—the dying away of the pain, the gentle softness of body-numbness, the glorious emptiness of no-feeling.

Jamie was opposite me, and we exchanged tomfoolery and subdued comradeship. They are right, those narrators of war, when they tell us something

noble—as also something nasty—comes out in the human race when men suffer together. Jamie and I could not believe the marvellous food they were giving us—Christmas fruitcake, tinned peaches and cream, bread, butter and cheese, and masses of sultanas. Of course the war was over. The yammering was stilled. Even the universal pall of black smoke was dissipating. In a way it was a kind of heaven. How were we to know it was the lull before a worse storm was to break over us—the storm of prison life, three and half years of it, in which many would die of starvation, of disease, of broken hearts and terrible bitterness, and others would weather it out?

One thing I remember clearly—the look in the eyes of the English Army sisters as they gave us pain-relieving shots of morphia. The opiates brought peace beyond even the worries of the unpredictable Japanese, the terrible cries of the badly wounded whose pain was scarcely eased by the drugs, and then those who could not face the shame of defeat at the hands of ‘the little yellow bastards’. Homesickness swept through ward after ward. During the action, it had been fire that swept through some wards in improvised hospitals. At Princess Alexandria Hospital it had been the Koreans who had swept through, leaving a bloody trail by reason of their atrocities.

I wondered at the time at the pity in the eyes of the sisters. They gave us drinks and cake and sultanas—masses of sultanas—all from the Christmas parcels lying in the GPO next door. I did not know they were giving us lethal doses of morphia: they thought we would never arrive alive at the Prisoner of War Camp, and they wanted us to have a painless end. A year later I discovered by chance that only Jamie and

I had lived through those lethal doses. This detail has a lot to do with the ending of this story.

It was our arrival in the prison camp that was the true commencement of my studied account—the appreciation of Jamie MacAlistair. What I have written about our lives prior to this is simply an orientation towards us for any one who will attempt to read our story. Because of the heavy drugging, I guess we knew little of our trip from the hospital in Singapore city to the prison camp in the Changi area. Arrangements at that point were *ad hoc* until the hospital was fully set up at Robert's Barracks. The building in which we were hospitalised was fine enough, but the minds of some patients were in shambles.

I have learned that culture shock comes from one primary element, namely that of making comparisons. In the year before war action we had often compared the rich and intense green of the Malayan jungle and plantations with our more olive green of eucalypts and other Australian flora. In Malaya there were no open spaces apart from a parade ground here and there. We hungered for wide open spaces. Also at this point of the Singapore catastrophe many men were sick with painful bacillary dysentery. They were disheartened by defeat, disillusioned of the image of the bronzed Aussie fighter, and ashamed of their own fear in the face of the devastating Nipponese warrior. Comparison of what had been with what was now happening cut the nerve of courage. The shock that had gone through them was more wounding than bullets or shrapnel or bomb. War neurosis had set in, and some simply decided to die.

Jamie was in another ward, and we could send messages to one another, but we watched in silence as men died in torpor and apathy, having no will to live. Some precious stocks of special food were used to tempt them to an interest that might draw them on to live. It was in vain: they simply died. That was the beginning of the battle we were yet to fight. Diseases of all kinds were in the air. Malaria was beginning to show itself as the result of nights in the jungle when we were too busy to use protective treatments. Dengue fever visited many monthly, and these two sicknesses were painful and debilitating. As yet beri-beri had not set in, but the lack of protein in the diet was already threatening the constitutions of the men.

In those early days we would hear the crackling of machine-gun fire not far from the camp. At night it would seem the yammering would never cease. Chinese who had been loyal to the Allied troops were systematically exterminated. This made many feel more wretched. If there had been hope of an early release the news on the secret radio receiver damned such hope as wishful thinking. Then some of the patients heard that hospital stores had been ratted by some of our fellow-prisoners and that food and drugs had been stolen—drugs which would be sold on the black market.

Jamie and I were scandalised. Appalled is a weak word for what we felt. We wondered whether we might have done the same thing had we been well. Suspicion of one another was growing. Even so, we saw and heard remarkable things—strange acts of sacrificial selflessness as some of the working troops brought food to their mates in hospital. I was caught in a battle of anger and wonder. I had studied theology

at one period of my life and now I was trying to fit it into this terrible scene.

When the hospital at the Robert's Barracks was set up we were transferred to one of the wards. It was a building on its own, and sixty of the worst of the wounded were jammed in. So close were the beds that each would have to be shifted in order to let the doctor examine a patient. Men whose heads had been opened—part of their skulls sheared off—others with amputated or fractured limbs, and some whose stomachs had been blasted open: all were in that ward, and day and night the groaning was incessant. The surgical stink was so strong that some friends could not visit without vomiting. I lost seventy pounds in three weeks and Jamie was reduced similarly. The consolation for Jamie and me was that our beds were placed together.

One day the announcement was made that pain-killing drugs would now cease being used. Only when a person's situation was near to being lethal would the husbanded medication be used. The supply of food lessened and its quality deteriorated. Gangrene set in in some patients, and those of us whose legs were in splints developed bedsores and even dry gangrene. I found to my horror that my right leg was virtually paralysed. It was the case with Jamie also because of a severed nerve. Surgery did not help us to any appreciable degree. When, eventually, our emaciated legs were lowered from the splints, we lived in terror that they might break if we used them. Trying to get movement in the stiff limb and keep the wound from infection kept the mind busy. Learning to walk again was a painful event which took many months.

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I have put all this material together in order to explain the processes of mind and emotion which Jamie and I were experiencing. Even so, it was not all pain, sickness and gloom. To the contrary: there was lots of fun. The orderlies and other medicos did everything possible to hearten the patients. Doctors would work most of the day and then return late at night when crises and difficulties seemed to increase. The spirit of humour, fun and teasing was there in the patients. The AIF concert party made history with its wonderful scripts, music and banter. Only some remained sullenly gloomy—the perennial pessimists. A library had been created from the books the troops had gathered prior to being incarcerated, and works of fiction and nonfiction were reasonably available. The able in body and mind could even attend lectures at secondary and tertiary levels. For a time a university was established, but working parties broke that up. Lecturers and students alike were locked securely into rail vans and began the trip north to the Thai–Burma railway construction. They had been promised a sort of paradise in the north—away from the sounds and motions of war—and many volunteered to go, and were seen off by envious prisoners who had missed the great opportunity.

Great opportunity! It had been only an opportunity to work under inhumane labour camp conditions: an opportunity for many to die from diseases—bacillary and amoebic dysentery, malaria, dengue fever, beri-beri, tropical ulcers—some of them diphtheritic—along with terrible typhus and horrific cholera. Those with dreadful leg and arm tropical ulcers, as well as cases of fever, had to work, even if in some cases it was to sit—or lie—and strain at the long cables to hold the bridges they were building.

The cruelty of Japanese guards and some of the horrifying atrocities committed on the prisoners have now become a proverb in the century of war.

When they returned, we who could now hobble around did our best to minister to them. Many of our closest friends and mates were unrecognisable. The skin was stretched taut on the skull, and the eyes had receded and themselves were a blank. Each person was a numbed walking skeleton, hands drooping, manner indecisive, covering over in himself the horrors of the cholera hills where thousands were burned and the stench of burning and rotting flesh filled the nostrils of other sick and dying, whilst those who had not succumbed to one or other disease worked doggedly to maintain life. Some—as in the early days—had sat down along the trail of the death march and decided to die. No one dared call it suicide: it could only be called escape from living death.

In the evening Jamie and I would meet and talk. Talk we had to, not only to retain sanity but to work through the things of living and the things of dying. Machine-guns were trained on us from every corner of the camp, and Japanese soldiers walked the barbed wire fenced catwalk. Death itself was no terror to us two, for long ago we had found faith to live, and it was that faith which was a dyke holding back the oceans of despair which sometimes sweep in and inundate the spirit of human beings. Our problem was whether in fact—in the face of all things—it was worthwhile living in this world.

The bitterest thing had been the ethical one—the keeping of our integrity in the face of the silent cries, ‘Every man for himself!’ and ‘Blow you Jack, I’m all

right!’ The terrible law of lawlessness—such as James Clavell portrays in his book *King Rat*—was upon us: people vying for advantage, using their place and positions to ensure living, when living by that means demeans the spirit that attempts it. Memories are forever, and any chance thing may bring them flooding back when the spirit is in agony about its own failure. We were not foolish enough not to see this. Besides, we had knowledge of what is the truth, and that can be an ecstasy at times, but mainly it is the agony.

In some corner of the camp we would sit—maybe just above the slit trenches which we had dug to protect ourselves against the silver armada of American Flying Fortresses which droned overhead now, day after day, high in the heavens, raining down their terrible loads of destructive bombs across an Island which seemed to have shrunk to a minimal territory. We would listen to the symphony of frogs in the damp slit trenches as they sang their notes pitched high and low, and we would talk about mankind, and sometimes about God, but mainly about ourselves.

I guess we had come a long way since the days of the Showground. We worried our way through the selfishness of men and nations, and puzzled our way through the magnificence the human race sometimes portrayed and the contradiction of it all. We kept away from idealism and utopianism, for we knew enough of history to know how dangerous such high-flying thought could be.

The particular night that stands out in my memory was that following a day from which we had emerged bruised and trembling. I am not exaggerating

in saying that 'bruised and trembling' was true, and it all happened through Gerry Anders who was our physiotherapist. He was a man we admired, and we were grateful for the massage he gave to our atrophied muscles. The room in which he and others worked had old electrotherapy machines which galvanised our muscles—if in fact, that were possible.

It was what he said to Jamie that galvanised me. He said, almost casually, 'Jamie, you must be about the most egotistical man I have ever met.'

Jamie sat still. I knew he had been pierced by the statement. I wanted quickly to go to his defence, but didn't. I knew that what went for Jamie must also go for me.

Gerry continued in his quiet, calm voice, 'You really do think you are someone, don't you? You are a cut above us all.' There was no bitterness in the statement.

Jamie was like a stunned mullet, not moving. I tried to detect anger in Gerry's voice, but there was none. He had just observed us and Jamie in particular.

'You have something against human beings, don't you?' he asked, but the question was rhetorical. In any case, Jamie could not have answered. We knew what he was saying, and we remained silent as we hobbled towards our hut. Jamie sat with his walking stick in his hands, between his legs. He lent on it with his forehead as though he was terribly, terribly tired. After a time I went off to water our small vegetable garden from the 'rose bowl'—the container for our night urination.

In the evening we sat above the slit trenches and discussed Gerry's heart-numbing revelation.

Jamie said, 'You know, Denny, it's true—what he says.'

I said, 'You're no egotist, Jamie. Maybe he means something different to what we do when we think about egotism.'

Jamie nodded. 'Even so, we are critics,' he said. 'We are always looking at the wrong in the fellows.'

For a time we remained silent, thinking over this revelation. Then I asked him, 'Do you remember the slice of cake?' He hadn't remembered it. There was one amazing day when a cake was divided amongst the men. Maybe it was a left-over Christmas cake, but we wondered how it had lasted so long. When it was divided there was one slice short. One of the orderlies would have to go without. Jamie had slid his piece on to the tray and the orderly was delighted—thinking there had been enough for all. I think I was the only one who knew about it. Jamie was like that.

There were other things like it, but Jamie would have none of that encouragement. 'I think we have turned into Pharisees,' he said, 'always being self-righteous, always being one above the mob.'

He was right, of course. Even foregoing a slice of cake can boost the ego, although I knew this wasn't true of MacAlistair.

We both worked in the library, and in between letting out books and binding the broken ones, we talked about Gerry's comment.

One day Jamie seemed to be out of his hurt. He looked fine. 'I think I know the answer,' he said. 'I think it is being centred on others, and not on yourself.'

You would have thought we had heard about the miracle at the River Kwai, but we hadn't, yet something like that began to happen with us. We gathered

friends around us like a sect of sorts, and began sharing ideas. Something began to grow amongst us and it was real. Someone called it 'other-person centredness'. Jamie said we had better be quiet about it and ego had better be kept out of it.

After some months we knew the war was over. The Japanese Commandant of the Singapore sphere of war was the last to sign the Capitulation document. He had wanted to go down in a blaze of glory. The guards left the catwalk. Commandoes dropped in from somewhere, and Lord Mountbatten gave a speech. He encouraged us to walk out to freedom—to enjoy the Island, since everything was safe for us. It was mainly the fellows belonging to our group who felt free to do this. Others cowered back in their huts but then all delighted in the new rations.

Jamie and I were both on the *Oranje*—the beautiful Dutch luxury-cruiser which had been converted into a hospital ship. We had a cabin to ourselves, and alternated between adoring the beautiful nurses—all women were beautiful to us—and talking over what we would do when rehabilitated into civvy street.

Jamie said, 'We must never forget what we have learned. It will all come suddenly upon us when we get home.'

Something came upon us, without doubt. The wonderful ticker tape welcome, the tens of thousands lined up to greet the first batch of returning Japanese prisoners of war. Pity and love were showered on us. We were bewildered with the welcome and wondered whether our assessment of the human race was wrong, after all. When we arrived at the Repatriation Hospital our families were waiting

to take us home. Jamie and I were parted as we gave ourselves over to waiting relatives.

Jamie put his name in for a land ballot and was given a great block in the New England, down near Walcha. I went back to study after a year or two. In between I was married and we took time off to live in the country before returning for my studies. We shared the things Jamie and I had learned, and Laura—my wife—was a quick and natural learner. 'Of course,' she said, 'that is how it must be.'

For some years Jamie and I corresponded regularly. Then study and farming—along with the coming of children—caused our letters to be intermittent. Jamie had buried himself in his farm and his family, and was kept occupied. Laura and I moved interstate, to Adelaide in fact, for we liked that city and its climate. I had begun to write for a public, so that along with study, graduation and a teaching job I was able to give rein to our philosophy or—if you will—our faith.

I always regretted that we had grown apart, but bringing up families in the fifties to the seventies was no small task. We went through tussles with our children, calling their opposition 'rebellion' but knowing they were thinking as they had been trained by us. We had no call to object. Slowly they settled down. Occasionally Jamie would write and share his tribulations and we would encourage each other. Only once did we meet in a planned encounter—the four of us, Jamie and Gloria, Denny and Laura. We had booked a motel and spent some days lazing in the sun and chatting. The MacAlistairs had to get back for shearing but not before Jamie and I

had talked ourselves out. Our letters were more regular after that until retirement came to Jamie and Gloria, and we shifted to the Adelaide Hills to work on more writing and more tapestry and fine needle-work.

I guess I would not be writing this story had I not been rushed to the Repatriation Hospital. Our local GP thought it might have been a heart attack, or even a mild stroke. Anyway I was put into Ward Two, and a couple of days later Jamie was standing beside my bed. I thought Laura must have phoned him, but that was not the case. The two of them were on a caravan tour and had called in to see us in the Hills. Jamie had come to the hospital to see me. It was a warm reunion, but it proved a bit too much for Jamie. A sister saw him trembling and called the ward doctor. He thought we had better end our disturbing conversation and Jamie had better lie on a bed for a rest.

Unbelievably that afternoon he had a heavy heart attack and was rushed to the intensive care unit of the Coronary Care Ward. Gloria was called in and Laura came with her. Jamie had suffered heavy infarct—deterioration of the heart tissue—and his situation was serious. I was allowed to see him after a day's impatient wait. Gloria and Laura were both a bit teary. In our first session we both caught up with the news of each other. The sister shushed me from the ward.

For the next few days I was told to be quiet and just lie there. Veterans' hospitals are busy places. A stream of comrades is always moving into ward after ward. One or two of our old Signals unit discovered

me, and reminiscences were exchanged with a certain amount of humour and delight.

I felt stimulated when two of the men had chatted and departed—visiting time being over. I was surprised to see Jamie in hospital pyjamas and dressing gown bearing down upon me. I wondered they had let him leave his ward.

He shook that thought off impatiently. 'Just had to see you Denny,' he told me. 'Just have to chat over a few things.' I was curious about that statement, but a sister came to give me a sleeping tablet. I told her I would take it later when Jamie and I had finished chatting. She looked at him rather curiously. She was a young sister but had good discernment. I wondered why Jamie puzzled her. I think I know now, but that knowledge will have to wait for confirmation. One day I will talk to her about it.

Jamie seemed deeply moved and somewhat restless. My health was in good order: it seemed I would be discharged the next day. This night was to be our special night. Jamie and I talked at length and no sister came to disturb us.

I knew Jamie was pale, but I put that down to the effects of his illness. He seemed strong enough, and talked vigorously. I sat back, and for the most part listened. He ran through our days in the RRD at the Showground, our training in Bathurst, our embarkation and our times at Port Dickson and Mersing.

Once he leant across to me and said, 'To tell you the truth, Denny, I feel strange at this time—stranger than ever I have felt.' He did not wait for me to comment, but went on. 'You know, Gloria and I have had a lot of trouble with the children, and even with some of their children.' His look was appealing.

'Do you remember what Gerry said that day in the

physio room? Do you remember him calling me an egotist?’

I said I remembered, and as I spoke the latter days of the prison camp came strongly back to memory. So much so that I felt a flutter in my spirit, and even a surge in my system as though the adrenalin caused by thinking was stimulating me. I was remembering lots of other things, and it included laying signal cable, and being on the foreshores of the Johore Straits and seeing the 2/4th machine-gunners firing incessantly into the hordes of small yellow men as they drove their barges towards the land. I sensed Jamie was a bit excited also. He looked paler as the time went on, but he spoke calmly enough.

When he stared at me it seemed as though our past life together had flooded in, and the present did not at all figure with us. ‘He was right, you know,’ he said. ‘He told us the truth that day. How bigoted and how self-centred we were, and how censorious!’

When I nodded he went on, ‘You know, Denny, I have never forgotten that day. It did more for me than almost anything else has done. The whole of it has stuck with me over the years. I have seen self-centredness in myself, in Gloria, in our children, and in our neighbours, but it has never made me angry. Maybe it has made me a bit sad, but then never angry.’

He looked at me and asked, ‘How has it been with you?’

‘Much the same,’ I told him. ‘It is as though life is a choice between the principle of King Rat in Changi and that of the men at the River Kwai in Gordon’s account. Nothing is different here to there. Humans are all the same but they can be different—according to their wills.’

‘And wisdom,’ Jamie said. ‘Wisdom is what you get when you think of others.’

I felt like making a confession. ‘I have made so many silly mistakes,’ I said, ‘with Laura and the children and others. I thought I was pretty proof against mistakes.’

He grinned in the old way I had known years before. ‘Denny,’ he said, ‘it takes a lifetime to become complete. I feel complete just about now.’ There was a distant look in his eyes. Then he turned to me. ‘Yes, Denny, it takes a whole lifetime, and I guess that was how it was meant to be. We thought we were more mature than others in the prison camp, and when we came home we were sure we were. Yet we were only apprentices. We needed all these years with all their mistakes. Look at you: I would say you are complete and it has taken all those things to make it so.’

‘Does it take a whole life?’ I asked with a bit of wonder in my voice.

‘Of course,’ he said quietly. ‘It would have to be that way.’

I was pondering that as we gripped hands. I saw him wander out and guessed he was making his way up the ward, back to his own bed. Something in me suddenly blossomed into rare happiness. ‘Complete,’ I thought, and I wondered why I hadn’t seen it before. It was a fascinating thought. Then I asked myself, ‘What does a man do when he is complete? What does a woman do when she is complete?’ I thought of Laura and then of Gloria.

Jamie amazed me, of course, but I had a rich night’s sleep—without any tablet.

Laura was there when I woke and so was Gloria. They both looked at me with faint smiles. ‘Jamie’s

gone,' Gloria said quietly. 'He went very gently in the night.'

'After talking to you,' Laura said, as though it had something to do with Jamie's going.

I suppose it did really, but I was able to return their faint smiles, and their understanding. I wondered why I had not written about Jamie before—given my passion for writing biography. Something in the back of my mind told me it would have been pre-emptive.

'That's right,' I agreed as I put on the dressing gown and went with the two women to pay my last respects.

Being in Communion

They shall not know who knowing would
 Find knowledge of themselves by self
 Which of its self and in its self
 Expects the treasures of that self
 To yield what once was given
 But locked is ever more
 Because of selfish self, proud mind
 In *hubris* bound—forever bound.

Within the Triune Self—the Self-ful Self
 That selfless is—lies all the wisdom
 That we need to know and must.
 Those Three are One, are Three in One
 Who share the gifts and attributes
 Concentred as they are each one on others
 As others all are One.

Within their love they penetrate
 And interpenetrate and circulate
 The giving of themselves in flow
 That never stays the order that it gives,
 In which it lives as Love. They give
 And in their giving honour each
 And serve as they receive.

Their Being is communion full,
 And nought exists but this,

The fellowship that springs
 Eternal in the union full that's theirs,
 Which ours shall be when we
 Each one with them unite
 Through Spirit and through Son
 And through the bloody Cross
 And Tomb all calm, redolent with
 The peace he won—that bloody One—
 In vict'ry's Death, and vict'ry's Tomb
 With Resurrection shout—Ascension's cry
 That meets the One on high
 With holy jubilation.

This liberty is his who seeks
 Not in the confines of his self
 But in the wide dimensions of that Self
 That Triune is and One
 And has His Being in communion full.
 As One is Three and Three are One,
 And outwards turns first to create
 And then redeems what's lost
 Within the bondage of its self:
 So Man who follows after Him
 Shall reap the fruits of bloody Cross
 And high Ascension's love.
 It's his to have who needs to have,
 Who takes in faith, lays hold on life
 And flees the ancient self
 That fought the Triune Self.

This liberty of love is called
 'The liberty of sons', is called
 'Man's glorious liberty'. It is
 The liberty of God Himself,
 Within Himself—of Persons Three

Full One in love. This is the gift
 That God gives to His ones
 Who covet liberty, who long
 To live within that Trinity
 As one with Them, as one with Him,
 As one among themselves—
 A Kingdom royal and a priesthood full
 For all eternity.

These things are *now*,
 Not only *then* but *now*.
 In Him we have the secret of the way
 Of *being* in communion.
 We have the way of life—
 To be in Him and He in us;
 And us—each one—in us each one
 As all in Him. Here Love
 Unites in one and makes us all
 To be in that communion.

The Healing of Indwelling

SOME YEARS ago I conducted a special denomi-national series with large groups of clergy with the pretentious title 'Trinitarian Counselling'. I had worked out a system in which I saw the personal need of human beings for a relationship with the Father—as sons and daughters—with Christ as the Son and Elder Brother and with the Holy Spirit as Revealer of Father and Son, Communicator of love and power, and Leader in the daily actions of life.¹ I remember one psychiatrist getting most excited. He said it made great sense for his own clinical therapies.

I believe this essay relates well to another, 'The Source and Sense of All Relationships'² and whilst it may repeat some of the material of that work, it has other aspects which could prove useful. I start off, then, by giving an outline in regard to Divine and human relationships. The thesis is that all Divine relationships within the Trinity can have—should have—their counterparts in human relationships. Since human relationships are the meat and matter

of all counselling, theological sense can bring practical reality and healing.

A MATTER OF DIVINE AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

- (1) Because Man is made in the image of God, and is so the image and glory of God (Gen. 1:26–27; 5:2; I Cor. 11:3), he reflects wholly the nature of God, whilst himself not being God. It is the image which gives him affinity with God. He is made in the image of the Triune God, and not just of one of the Persons of the Godhead.
- (2) God is not a Divine Monad but has plurality. There are Three Persons of the Godhead. The fullness of Deity is in each of the Three, but not as to make them three Gods. The Athanasian Creed sets out their fullness of Deity by insisting on the co-equality of the Three without denying the diversity of their Personalities.
- (3) It is the Unity of the Godhead which is basic to all relationships. Called by some 'the Triune Family', 'the Triune Community', they have one central and integrating unity, they being Love and Love positing unity.
- (4) Their Unity is known—as revealed in Scripture — because each Person is 'other-Person centred' or 'other-Person *concentred*'. Thus the Son can talk of being 'in the Father' and claiming the Father is in him. John 17:20ff. is the *locus classicus* of this matter of One being in the

¹ For further reading see my *The Everlasting Presence*, NCPI, 1990.

² *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*, NCPI, 1990, pp. 84–91.

Other, the result being total Oneness. The Three have total interpersonal relationships. Thus they are One. This can be seen by the fact that the Father is Son-concentred, and the Son Father-concentred, and so on. In one sense each has his Being by reason of the object of his affections and yet they are One Being together.

- (5) This unity-in-love is demonstrated by the Father honouring the Son, the Son honouring the Father, the Spirit honouring the Father and the Son and They (implicitly) honouring the Spirit. The Father glorifies the Son, the Son glorifies the Father, the Spirit glorifies Them both, and They glorify him.
- (6) Man made in the image of God must reflect this inner unity of the inner plurality of the Godhead. He too will be 'an other-person centred' creature. Whilst, by the Fall, man moved away from total mutual relationships with God and his fellow-creatures (cf. Rom. 1:21–32) confusing and distorting those relationships, yet he has an essential thrust to true relationships, because he cannot *deny* the (ontological) truth of his humanity. Of course he can *defy* it—which he does—but this is to his own hurt, hence the enormous internal and relational conflicts he has which for some therapists are interpreted as demonic, so 'devilish' are they in their resultant hatred, anger and violence. The therapist must understand that these states arise from a denial of creational, relational structures of the person.

- (7) When regeneration (forgiveness, purification, justification, adoption and the inflooding of the love of God) comes to a repentant person having faith in Christ, then there is a relational renewal. There is first reconciliation with God, and simultaneously, reconciliation with others, with the creation and with oneself. It is at this point that the relationships in the Triune Godhead are evidenced in the life of the believer, and this within the Community of Christ, the Church, which is really the Triune Community worked out in the fellowship of God's elect—His redeemed children. This should teach us that if the reconciling dynamic of the work of the Atonement, and openness to the work of the Spirit of God are not taught, known and experienced, then the radical renewal of the person will be impeded. If supportive and substitutionary attempts are made to assist the person which divert faith in the completed work of Christ and the applicatory work of the Spirit, then the healing and renewal of the person will be hindered and perhaps even staved off.
- (8) When it is asked, 'How can the Relationships with the Divine Family—the Triune Godhead —be known and replicated in the human person?', then the answer must first be that the Son who came as Jesus of Nazareth lived a wholly human life, lived it without sin, lived it in the hurly-burly of man's depravity, the curse, the dynamics of guilt which manipulate human behaviour, and did it all without failing. He becomes the paradigm of true

humanity, He explicates and reveals the inner relationships of the Trinity, and he works those out in terms of our humanity so that we can understand the *praxis* of them.

The second part of the answer to our question immediately above is that the person—by regeneration—is made into a new person. The new person naturally loves—‘We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren’ (I John 3:14)—i.e. loves God, loves others, loves himself (I John 4:19). The reconciliation has taken place. Even so, this does not take place without the coming of the Three persons of the Trinity *to dwell in the new believer* (John 14:15–23). One way of saying this is that love comes to dwell in the new child of God, he abides in God and God abides in him, he dwells in God and God indwells him. The following condensed excerpt from another essay I once wrote treats the whole matter of indwelling—God’s and Man’s.

We come now in this part to the reality of relationships within the Divine Family, and thus with the relationships we may have in this world—even in the face of contrary hatreds and divisions. It is the unity of which Christ speaks in John 17 and which can be effected only by the Triune Family indwelling Man, and Man indwelling Them. As we have said before on numerous occasions, the unity of the Godhead was love, and this love manifested itself in the ‘other-centred-ness’ or ‘con-centredness’ of the Persons in their mutual relationships. Now Jesus is asking for them to be admitted into the relationships and actions of the Divine Family, being—so to speak—immersed in the Father and the Son and the Spirit—and so being ‘one being with the Godhead’, for nothing could be more

intimate, domestic, unified and integrated than that. It is not simply that they will be located within the Divine Nature, or kept protected within it against hostile and contrary powers, but it is that they will participate in it, and so will learn on the one hand the matter of relationships—always acted out in the on-going, forwards-moving purpose and plan of God. They will be living the family life, which, on the human level, is so well stated in the Lord’s Prayer. All this is in accordance with the Lord’s prayer in John 17:20–26:

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

The whole matter of the mutual indwelling of the Members of the Divine Family, the indwelling of Them with their elect people and persons, as also the people with Them, is a strong teaching of the New Testament, let alone of the Old Testament. In John 14:14–23 we have news that the Spirit, the Father and the Son will in-dwell God’s believing people. Romans 8:9–11 insists that Christ and the Spirit of Christ must indwell the heart. II Corinthians 13:5 speaks of Christ’s indwelling as the true test of faith. Galatians 2:20 says this is the case. Ephesians 3:16–19 speaks of Christ’s indwelling by the power of the Spirit, and of the believer being filled unto all the fullness of God. Matthew 10:20 speaks of the Spirit of the Father in the heart, Galatians 4:6 of the Spirit of His Son in the heart, II Corinthians 1:22 of the Spirit being placed in our heart, likewise Romans 5:5 and II Timothy 1:14 speak of the Spirit’s indwelling.

On the matter of the people of God personally indwelling John 17:20–21 says,

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, *that they also may be in us*, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The classic passage on abiding in Christ is, of course, John 15:1–17, but the key to this beautiful passages lies in some words Jesus had previously said to his disciples (John 6:56), ‘He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.’ This speaks of intimate, but powerful involvement. The Pauline view of this relationship is ‘through, by, in and with’ Christ. There are some forty of these prepositions in the Letter to the Ephesians, either for being in Christ or Christ in his people. Of course the figure—or reality—of the church being members one of another but together being in Christ—especially because they have been baptised by one Spirit into one body—speaks of the same intimate relationship.

John in his First Letter says (2:6) ‘he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.’ He adds (3:24), ‘All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.’ He then goes on to make the rich statement (4:12), ‘No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.’ No less powerful are the verses 15 and 16 which are quoted below,

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Perhaps the very plentiful nature of these Scriptures may dull our minds to the great subject we are

discussing—‘God with us. God in us. Us in God!’ What a theme! How rich and wonderful it is. Having this intimacy, we know God as Father, Christ as our Lord and Elder Brother—and he is not ashamed to call us brethren. We also know the Spirit who indwells us and who is the Spirit of love, of unity, and of fellowship. How could we have other than good relationships?

- (9) When we look at the effects of God indwelling us and our indwelling God, we see *the first effect* is that *the image of God is restored*. Matthew 28:19 speaks of us being baptised in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Whilst in some measure this restoration is a *process*—following its initial *crisis*—yet it is also a *status*.

This is another way of saying—*the second effect*—that we can now have good relationships with God, man, creation and one’s self. This—properly speaking—should mean the healing of all relationships. It certainly sets the basis for bringing the counsellee to such healing. There can, then, be nothing as dynamic as the Indwelling—as I have pointed out in *The Everlasting Presence* (NCPI 1990). *The third effect* is that the elements and attributes of the Three Persons—the true Godhead—work out in the lives of those indwelling and indwelt. By ‘elements and attributes’ we mean Divine truth, holiness, righteousness, goodness and love, with all those associated with them such as experienced love, joy, peace, freedom, assurance and boldness—elements which make for good relational living and for good experiences of the creation and people among whom we live.

ELEMENTS OF APPLICATION IN THE MINISTRY OF INDWELLING OF GOD AND MAN

Much of the application of the matter of the Triune Family and human family relationships is explicit in the above material, and much of it, anyway, is implicit. Even so, a few elements can be noted, the first being that all Members of the Godhead are servants. They serve in creating and sustaining the universe and its creatures—celestial and terrestrial. Father, Son and Spirit serve in executing redemption and bring it to man. They serve as they press forward to ‘head up’, ‘fill up’, ‘reconcile’ and ‘harmonise’ all things. Thus as God is the True Servant—or archetypal as some would say—so we need to be servants. Personalities are always disturbed when they do not follow a full functional life. If they refuse servantship, fellowship, ‘other-person concentratedness’, honouring and glorifying others—all of which happens in the Godhead—then they cannot know the functional freedom of working out in the human scene the things that God does of Himself, and the relationships God has with each Member of the Trinity, and with creatures He has made. The counsellor who has some biblical knowledge and substantial theology can lead the counsellee to a place of full relational living.

What we have said also means that the counsellee must cease to think in anti-authority terms. Since the Father is in the Son, the Son in the Father and Both are in the Spirit and the Spirit in Them, then the ‘authority hierarchies’ (cf. I Cor. 11:3) should not trouble the one being counselled. Since the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, and since the man is in the Father and the Son, and since the Son

is in him then a hierarchy ceases to be an arrangement which troubles us, and becomes a means whereby we understand the functional outworking of life—in love.

This can be illustrated by Paul’s statement—or principle—in I Corinthians 11:3:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

Many exegetes have turned away from this verse muttering, ‘Hierarchy! Sheer hierarchy!’ Apart from the fact that hierarchy is presumed to be a bad thing when it may not be that way at all, turning away from hierarchy would be foolish if this was the way God thought things best to be. Now, with our knowledge of the internal relations of the Godhead—the inner sociality of the Triune Family—we can see that if Christ is in God, and God in Christ, and if the man is in Christ and Christ is in the man, and if the man is in the woman and the woman in the man, then what could be wrong about hierarchy? Nothing necessarily, for it is a hierarchy of relationships and not a mere ‘pecking order’. It is the contributory way of love.

It is possible, then, to see the reconciling, unifying, integrating elements that come from the living, creating and redeeming God. How the counsellor must know them in practice in order to share them in wise counselling!

Story's Golden Moment

HE WONDERED whether the golden moment for writing the story was gone. There was always the golden moment. Mostly, if you missed that moment—if you were lazy, or reluctant, or could not go through the pain of birthing the tale—then the story was like a living child within the belly who suddenly died on you.

He thought, 'No: it is not too late. This is the moment,' so he rolled—still half in sleep—off his comfortable bed and away from his wife and made his way to the study where the neat computer was waiting to take his tale into its mysterious mind, its efficient databank.

Even before he began to write he knew his story was a tenuous one. He would have to be gentle, coaxing back to life recent memory, recent experience, the string of incidents that slipped each one into the next and so made the whole of his story.

It was mainly connected with pain. The first great pain had been when his right leg had been blasted by a machine-gun burst. At the military hospital they had set the bone in a splint, and filled in the great hole with vaseline gauze. All the time, bombs and shells rained about the hospital, and his leg had shuddered on its platform splint.

That had been fifty years ago. Since the first operation, there had been others—those in the Prison Camp where they had tried unsuccessfully to restore a severed nerve—but the pain had persisted for the next half-century. It was still persisting. There had been a great abscess to be lanced and purified. Forty years later they had carried out an osteotomy, cutting both bones below the knee, resetting the bowed leg, putting it in plaster, thus bringing temporary relief from the osteoarthritis in the knee.

At that time the surgeon had grinned at him and said, 'This should keep you going for the next ten years. After that you will have to have a whole new knee: artificial, of course.' And so it had happened: about ten years later they had taken out his old knee joint and replaced it with an artificial one. For a time there had been what they called 'the wound pain', and then he had had relief from the osteoarthritis which had built up freshly. Then had come the disappointment: the pain was as bad as before, if not worse.

The surgeon had nodded and set his lips at the report of pain. 'You need a button under your knee cap,' he said. 'That will pad it against rubbing on the new knee joint.'

The strange thing was that up to this point he had never minded operations—'surgery' as they now called it after the North American style of speaking. It was necessary. He would bear with it. The days in hospital were times when old friends looked in on him, when he rested from the incessant pressure of his own creative mind. It was a time of catching up with his thoughts, and reading those of others.

On this occasion he found he was in a neutral state. Perhaps it was because he had thought his previous operation to be the last he would have. Even so, he lay back until the anaesthetist came and told him the story he had heard before.

'We will prepare you some time before the operation. We will give you something to make you tranquil. Then I will give you the anaesthetic. First you will feel something creep up your arm, like cold water. You will taste something like onion in your mouth. Then you will go to sleep and know nothing until you wake up in the recovery room.'

He had come to know the story well. He liked the tranquillity. He felt no fear. The thing that had not happened before was the PCA machine. The night before surgery they told him about this with some pride, since it was new to the hospital, and few others possessed them.

'Patient Controlled Analgesics' was what PCA stood for.

'You will hold this handle in one hand, and when pain is coming you will press the top of it with your thumb—like this! That will release the pain-killer into your vein, and the pain will go.'

He had noted the pride in their eyes—pride at a new machine, computerised distribution of relief from suffering. His mind wondered whether one day they could invent a machine which would neutralise emotional pain, keeping the spirit supported against intolerable stress. He grinned at the thought. He had—in his own mind—invented many uses for pain and suffering.

They did what they said they would do. They tranquillised him, anaesthetised him, and talked to him

in the theatre and after the operation in the recovery room. They wheeled the bed down the long corridors and set him in his right place in the two-person ward. They gave him blood, and saline, and inserted the needle of the PCA with the other two needles.

It was a strange business, controlling the pain. At first it was just a great relief, but after a time he thought it was a bit indecent, a kind of cheating the normal routine. In the old days—the times before this situation—he would say, as all others had had to say, 'Sister, could you give me something for my pain?'

Of course: at the very first they would hurry to help him—giving him relief from pain. Then—after a day or two—they would be a bit reticent about giving needles—mustn't get addicted you know! He had been uncertain about the reason. Finally it was oral pain-killers they gave him. It was SCA—Sister Controlled Analgesics.

After three days they took away the PCA. There was enough of the anaesthetic and the analgesics to keep the pain dulled, so he could concentrate on other things. It was 'the other things' which made his time in hospital so worthwhile. He was transported beyond his bed, and the hospital, the present and even the past—transported into another world. In this world he was sensitive to everything. Gossamer thoughts would spin cocoons of delight. He would be transformed from a fat caterpillar into a dull pupa within the gossamer cocoon. He would emerge as a brilliant butterfly to suck honey of transcendent thoughts from flowers of fantasy.

That was the time when reality was turned into dreams, when natural dimensions bent themselves, and shaped new shapes, and thoughts became poetic

and brilliant. His spirit sang in songs of unutterable joy, and unspeakable mystery. Dreams and visions succeeded one another, but they were also so real—more real than the reality of reality. They were, of course, born mainly of analgesics.

He wanted to retain them all on some mind receiver-recorder. He wanted instant recordings to peel off from a mind-copier. His thinking was transcendent, metaphysical, beautiful and glorious. He wanted to lose none of it all. He ran without effort, flew without friction, floated without gravitational pull. Ah, he loved that experience.

Eating was an interruption to him, a mindless and unnecessary operation. Ideas and visions fed him. The drugs gave him a distaste for food. Often he would let the pain flood in to him without asking for drug relief. In pain his visions were even more substantial. They lent reality to his cogitations, and gave meaning to his meanderings. The phone would ring and he would answer it, coming to temporary grips with the outer world. Visitors would come smiling, bearing gifts and showing awkward affection. He would talk politely about the operation, and his progress. There would be an interchange of impressions.

Some visitors would draw upon him, able to use the time to receive answers to questions they were asking and take counsel for their problems. No matter what the visitors did, he returned to his hospital ivory castle of thought and imagination. He had long ago fortified himself against the medical institutionalism of hospitals—resolutely retaining his own identity. He deliberately related to the staff as persons in an 'I-Thou' relationship. One efficient male-sister had addressed him as 'Well, young fellow!', and he

had replied tartly that he was older than the male attendant, and possessed a name by which he could be addressed. That member of staff had accepted his retort with grace and respect.

He liked the staff. Admired them immensely. He was grateful for their ministrations. For a few nights they gave him pethidine needles, especially because he asked for no pain relief during the day. He wondered whether he might be asking once too often, and told the sister his thoughts. She was to him a beautiful and intelligent person. She flashed him a tender and sympathetic smile.

'We are here to see that you suffer no pain,' she said. 'You don't need to think that way.'

Her look said much more than her smile or her words. It was direct love, and it flooded him with a wonderful sensation. Love, when it is met in its pure form, is beyond anything else that the human spirit can know. His fantasies were of the world of art, but this love was of the heart, and he did not try to record or retain it. He just let the gift of it flow into him, and mingle with the submission that patients know for the time of their conscripted passivity.

He knew he would have to emerge from the state of dreaminess, cogitation and rumination. He did not want to lose what had seemed to be creative reality, but which was dissipating in the healing of his wound and the passing of his pain. When he wrote sentences on his paper pad the words turned to hieroglyphics, and lacked reality. That did not worry him. He knew something of the mystery of the mind. It would take all into it and one day would bring it back to him in pure forms of creative truth.

That was why he felt that on this midnight the golden moment for writing his tale had come, and he set about it agreeably with his computer which assisted him with every aid he needed. Of course it was not exactly the same as bringing forth a babe which had been a foetus. The birth pangs were there but they were not painful. A long way back the pains had come and gone, making the pregnancy. Now it was a joy to see the child of fantasy spill forth.

Really the story of it was that pain should not be controlled out of being. Pain was intended to be felt, to be a warning, to give fibre to the spirit so that it could be attuned to a world in which pain is an essential part. Analgesics are not wrong. They are built into the creation. Indeed the system of the body manufactures them also, but the brilliance of the human race seeks out the drugs contained in plant life and chemicals and gives the body quick relief such as it cannot fully give itself in the moments of intense—even cruel—pain.

The other part of the story is that humans have healing in themselves. Humans are not static, nor are they victims of wounds and diseases. They can refuse destruction by accident and sickness, retaining their integrity by a consistent refusal to be demeaned. Greatness can come to them in the time of physical suffering. They can have hurt without self-pity, and learn of a world which transcends mere comfort and pleasure.

This time he was glad to leave the hospital. Other times he had given himself over to the luxury of invalidism, liking the slow return to health. Now he wanted to be away, like a scholar who has earned his degrees and wants to go beyond them, and live life

even more fully. He had absorbed the whole world of surgeons and physicians, sisters, nurses and aides, physiotherapists and social workers, kitchen staff and servers, cleaning helpers, and amenities' persons. With them he had absorbed the patients, the fellow-feelers in the wards, and those making their way down corridors with frames and walking sticks, or keeping themselves to themselves—never losing the advantages of their sicknesses and surgery. Sickness can be a shield behind which some hide whilst others pass over it resolutely, believing that people can heal themselves—given time and motivation. For the first, pathologies are accepted guests, but as for the second they are unwelcome invaders—not essentially part of any human creature.

He kept all the idiosyncrasies in mind—those of the staff, of the patients, of the visitors and of himself. They all added up into humour real, whimsical, and beautiful. They formed themselves into a great painting—almost beyond the art of the best artists. In another image they were grist for his creative mill of writing. Personally, they were the essence of his life as he interacted with theirs, or thought of them and spoke to them in the vocative. The actual stories, the happenings of humour and pathos—these would later emerge when they had matured themselves. He had to leave them to their own dignity and delight.

When the golden moment had formed itself, invited expression and fulfilled itself, he knew the thing was at an end. To add to it would be to go beyond it into forced unreality. Now it was there in the databank of his computer, and the databank of his mind—a treasured treasure amongst all the other things of his illimitable treasury. To him none of it was bric-a-brac. All that humans are and do is to be

accepted and thought upon. So his spirit bowed in gratitude to that golden moment, and accepted what was given, that somehow it might be further given—to others—if that was to be, and even if it was not to be.

How Beautiful the Feet

How beautiful are the eager feet,
 The feet that are on the high mountain.
 How eager the announcer of good news,
 The proclaimer of high peace, of true *shalom*
 To the beleaguered nation,
 To the captives in exile,
 To the ones who have thought,
 'He hides His face from us:
 Of us He is ashamed,
 He will not look at us again
 As His elect people, His beloved,
 The apple of His eye,
 The darling of His heart,
 The fruit of His electing will,
 The priest nation to the nations
 The intercessor of the lost tribes of Man,
 And the witness to the eternal
 Of Yahweh-God.'

Now on the high mountain—
 The one that overlooks His people,
 From whose pinnacle all is seen
 Of Israel as the beloved,
 And all the nations in death-darkness—

The glory shines: proclaimer and evangel alike
 Shine as the noonday sun in strength,
 Brilliant in promise,
 More glorious than a sun has ever shone
 But gentle with grace and love-acceptance.
 This light to lighten the Gentiles
 —Messiah himself—
 Is the glory of Israel His people
 Come new, come afresh,
 Come with abounding love—
 True *chesed*, *ahab* and His *racham*³—
 With everlasting kindness to fulfil
 The primal promise of death's death
 By the seed of woman.

High wrath had been upon the people;
 Wrath for the deadly idolatry,
 The lust for strange love
 And strange fire of spirit;
 Alien lords had gripped the hearts
 Of the covenant people.
 True Fatherhood had been surpassed
 By the fearsome illicit passion
 For the unholy deities:
 Perversely Paternity denied
 The warm-hearted love—the passion—
 For His covenant ones.
 Thus came the death-time, the lonely exile,
 The years of meditation, the tears,
 The longing for the house of worship,
 The fragrant presence of the Covenant-Yahweh
 And the true—the unutterable worship.

Suddenly then, on the high mountain,
 The true Evangelist appears,
 The real Davidic King, authentic Branch,
 Strong Intervener, Mighty God,
 The Everlasting Father in the Son.
 The mountain is so green: its pinnacle
 Ablaze with glory, soft with peace,
 Gentle with promise, strong in proclamation.

So now the people know—the true remnant—
 And soon the peoples of the world
 Will see the glory that he brings
 Spread as vast healing waters
 Across all lands: salvation comes
 For the healing of all nations
 Albeit by a bloody Cross with darksome death—
 There where feet, all beautiful,
 Pierced and all wounded were
 To purge each heart and purify each people.

There on the mount the Conqueror stands
 And hope has come to birth
 For Israel and the peoples.
 New Prophet, Priest and King
 Bestrides the earth and skies and seas
 And draws unto himself and to their God
 The elect, beloved flock.

³ Hebrew for 'grace', 'love' and 'mercy'.

Joy Comes in the Morning

All night the sorrow tarried.
 Tears came in unimpeded flow.
 There the darkness settled like a cloud
 Whose blackness smothered until the spirit gasped
 For lack of true breathing.
 Sorrow piled like covering cumulus
 That mists the endeavouring sight
 Until depression takes the dark spirit
 Into places darker than dark.

Tears flow where hurts renew
 And wounds bleed afresh. Memory
 Makes potent again what once died
 For lack of giving hate's reviving.
 Called 'the dark night of the soul'
 It is compounded of many things.
 Enemies breathe in the silent murk
 Having their power in the tenebrous,
 In the gloom that brings dread images
 To the scarcely breathing spirit.

Weeping is where the judgements come—
 The motions of God in the depths
 Of the condemned spirit. Failure

Seeks to avoid the retribution, pleads
 Self-justifying extenuation,
 And protests against what it knows
 Is the irreversible reality of sin.
 Those who are holy know most deeply
 The judgement of judgement.
 They know the mercy of the moving act
 Of the Holy One, the burning Spirit,
 The purging fire, and the separating sword.
 Pruning of the Father causes the vine
 To wince at His mercy, twist from His grace
 But the judgement comes truly,
 Often slowly, but always inevitable.
 Love must have its holy way.

When the spirit is bowed, wasting away,
 Pining to death, bound in its boundless waste
 And breathless in its dark wilderness,
 Then it is the support of the Presence
 Seems to have filled out its task
 And vanished so that the Absence of the Presence
 Is insupportable. This is why
 The burdened heart sinks towards death
 Dehydrated of its penitent tears,
 And having no hope. Full done
 Are the enemies' gibes and jabs, full done,
 The self-accusation that twists the two-edged knife
 Until all wounds are wounds anew
 And old memory is as it pristine was.
 Death is the only option left
 But mind's too feeble to accomplish it.
 Life has waned to death itself,
 Though pain's not gone, and semblances
 Of sorrow weave their ghostly wraith.

Then breaks the morning!
 It's the appropriate hour
 For dawn to have its glorious light,
 Its spreading flame of incandescent sky
 And darkest clouds illuminated.
 He rises—Sun of righteousness—
 Son of righteousness in whose wings
 Healing comes flowing, making wounds
 To gentle down the pain, softening
 To supernal joy. Throbs out
 The strength of God Himself
 For He Himself is joy. The dawn
 Is death of death's death and life of life,
 And tears all come afresh, but for fresh joy
 And wonderment at grace and love,
 Astoundment at the mercy deep
 That flows when judgement's made
 And enemies are banished—slain by love—
 And joy comes flooding as king tides do
 At the time and season of the spirit's need.

The Presence, present is, and in it, this—
 Joy's fullness as God's own *pleroma*,
 His own intrinsic and extrinsic mode
 Of utter utterness. Joy is His life
 And joy His way. His dawn
 Is dawn eternal, light breaking
 As His Holy City, as His Self
 As Father, Lamb and Dove,
 As God in whom we all partake,
 Whose night has been the Cross,
 Whose death has been the Tomb,
 Whose life has been in Resurrection
 Unto the eternal dawn, the eternal day

Where weeping's gone, and wounds are healed
 And all look into the eyes of Love
 That now are Joy-in-Peace.
Creation's dawn when angels sang,
Salvation's dawn when Death brought Life,
And now the dawn of all Eternity.

Joy in the Morning

DARKNESS TO LIGHT . . .

PSALM 30 has a powerful beauty which turns our eyes to it, and we are unable to draw away from it. At the heart of it is embedded the fifth verse:

*For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favour is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning,*

The composer of this Psalm has been through a terrible crisis. Human beings can be cruel, and his enemies have been just that, ready to taunt him with failure. He has had an illness which threatened death, and like King Hezekiah he has cried to God in the midst of it, and God has heard. Also He has answered: He has healed His servant, the servant who was on the edge of death, and who seemingly had no hope. He was about to slip down into the darkness and be lost to this life forever. The night of his suffering seemed long—intolerably long. It had been akin to what St John of the Cross called ‘the dark night of the soul’.

One does not have to be a mystic—as were St John of the Cross and his brethren—to have a dark night

of the soul. Few there be that have not had such, and it takes so many forms in the different cases that have been. The Psalmist knew what many of us have come to know, the very sickness of illness, the onslaught of terrible disease, the hopelessness of it all, the despair of ever attaining to good health again. There are even more fearful experiences than physical illness. There are the sicknesses of the mind which pursue and haunt many a person. Out there in that kind of darkness there is a dread of spirit, a nameless anxiety and fear which nothing can evaporate, and the goaded mind seeks a way of escape from its horrible malaise but cannot find it. This is, indeed, a dark, dark night of the soul.

For others it is the terror of death—a terror no one can abate. There is no physic for it, no abatement by medication. If sedated then the spirit wakes up in the dead of night, the heart beating—pounding away in such accelerated fashion that the victim can scarcely breathe. The darkness around him is oppressive. Thick blackness encloses him like some supernatural creature choking the last breath from him. No more powerful description of this state of being—bluntly called God’s wrath—exists in human literature than that of Psalm 38:1–8.

The writer of Psalm 30—possibly the same as that of Psalm 38—does not dwell much on his dark night of the soul. He confesses that he had been self-confident and over-confident. He really admits that he deserved the shattering experience which came to him, but then he knows the God of covenant who is merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, who abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness and who forgives

sins and transgressions and iniquities—where there is penitence, of course. None of this knowledge seems to lessen the dread that visits one in the dark night. That is why the Psalm has brought hope to many, and then peace and joy as the God of hope has given the morning of glory to dispel the night of doubt and suffering: ‘Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.’

Numerous are the examples of such darkness being flooded by relieving light. We think of the sorrow of the death of Christ, and the watching eyes of the women who deeply loved him—his mother, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene. Each had her heart-focus on him. Each had hopes of a new world to come with him, and from him, but the hopes were bitterly disappointed. It was a dark night for their souls to watch his own personal dark night in the blazing sun on Golgotha, especially as it became the sombre three hours of gloom which spread across the land. What were their thoughts as they saw him laid in the tomb, and saw the heavy stone rolled across it, shutting him out from them, so it seemed, forever?

The men, called his disciples, were probably steeped in gloom and self-recrimination. John had certainly been at the Cross, and yet perhaps was the only one of them. Peter had denied him to the servant-maid and gloom had settled over him. The terrible loneliness that a human knows who has denied the deepest friendship of his love is not easy to bear. Other disciples suffered scarcely less than Peter. Weeping tarried with them from the hours of the Friday evening until the Sunday morning, and then —seemingly—there was no relief. It was a long long night!

If Mary Magdalene did not come weeping to the tomb, then it was not long before her sobbing broke out. She had come to the tomb and had been disturbed by the events there, but none of those reassured her. Only looking back would she realise their supernatural nature. She came looking only for a corpse, and expecting nothing but a corpse. The sorrow of her soul deepened as the moments passed. The tomb was empty and so she dreaded what had happened to the remains of her beloved Lord. Doubtless her mind flashed back—time and again—to that liberating moment when he had cast the seven demons out of her. Her days had been terrible ones—never knowing when she would be seized and tormented by the cruel spirits who ruled her. Then—through him—the great peace had come to her, the calm that had drenched her soul and lightened her mind, and which had brought her back to wholesome sanity—all at a word from him, the Master. Now he was gone.

But then he was there! His word, ‘Mary!’ startled her. At first she could not believe it. There was no missing corpse, but a living man. He was not any man, but *the* Man. Her cry came involuntarily, ‘*Rabboni!*’ which was something like ‘Little Master!’ —a term of intimate endearment. Undoubtedly he was there! The darkness of her night fled as the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings. It was not only the lightening dawn which flooded in but the bright brilliance of the new day of eternal hope—the day of the Risen Lord!

The two disciples trod their way to Emmaus, their feet sinking in the Eastern dust, their own spirits

dull and deadened. They scarcely noticed him as he joined them—there were always so many strangers about at festival times. He asked them, ‘What are you talking about?’ They wondered at the man, and how it was possible he could not have heard the things of the apprehension of their Master by the high priest, the priests and the Sanhedrin—along with the rough soldiers. Right now every one was talking about the hasty judgement, the condemnation and the hanging of the one who—they had thought—would redeem Israel. They scarcely looked at their companion as they said, ‘And now it is the third day.’ When there is sorrow in the spirit, time drags itself along, and joy had long gone to some other place.

They did not know what was happening to them, so subtle was the shift, yet so quick also. Later—after he had revealed himself in the breaking of bread at their invitation—they knew who it had been. They looked at each other and laughed their joy, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us as he spoke to us along the way?’ Who, then, is this one who can visit a person in his dark night of the spirit and make the heart of that one burn? Well, of course, now they knew. Their sorrow had fled. Their weeping had suddenly dried up, and before they had realised it they were speeding back to Jerusalem to spread the news. Weeping had gone forever!

Even so, their fellow-disciples were dubious, as they, too, had been dubious. None of them had believed the women in the morning when they had reported the resurrection. Perhaps they had been sympathetic with these females and what seemed to be a wish-fulfilment dream, but at least John had believed. Even so, on that evening they were all

crowded into that upper room with the door locked because of their fear of the Jews. They might be apprehended at any moment!

Then he appeared. Their minds were not too stunned to rationalise that appearance. His ghost, of course! But then no phantom ever looked so alive, nor had spoken such words as ‘*Shalom* to you all!’ Peace! What is peace when the spirit writhes in the prison of the dark night, and when the heart aches with its endless despair? Yet he was there—before them! At first ‘they believed not for joy’, and then ‘they were glad when they saw the Lord’, and especially so when he said a second time, ‘Peace be to you.’ The darkness dissolved in a flash, and the light of the new day—the eternal day—came flooding in. Weeping had tarried over their long lonely night, but joy had come with the new morning. Their Saviour and Lord was present to them, and with them, forever.

Perhaps, for Peter, the night had lingered on, relieved no doubt by intimations of a new dawn, but patches of darkness still clung to his spirit, depressing his mind. Whilst the resurrection had relieved him of the sorrow of a seemingly irreversible death, yet it had also sensitised him more to his failure. Perhaps he sought relief in his fishing—the only thing he could do well—but even there there was no relief for he could catch nothing! In the early dawn, and scarcely discernible to their peering eyes, was a man on the beach of the lake, and he was looking out to them. John, at Peter’s side, had quick recognition. ‘It is the Lord!’ he cried, and Peter, suddenly shy, cast his robe around his naked body, and threw himself into the sea making towards that figure on

the shore. The gentle call, 'Come and eat breakfast,' was homely enough, and must have brought back a flood of memories, but the weeping was not all gone, anyway not for Peter. Some sorrow remained, and it needed the personal conversation he and his Lord had alone from the others. Each question of the Lord—'Simon, do you love me?'—thudded into him, bringing pain. Finally he protested, 'Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.' That cry told him—himself—that he truly loved the one whom he had denied, and now—with that realisation—the new morning came flooding in. The waters of the lake flashed and gleamed under the new sun, and his dark night was gone forever. Like the writer of Psalm 30 he was able to speak richly of the grace of God, for it had visited him liberating his spirit, so that he could share the liberation of grace with the world of his day.

The shepherd who loved his lost sheep was not perfunctory in his search for it. He had first to enclose his ninety-nine other sheep—also beloved—in a sheepfold of thorns and briars, making them proof against wild animals and devourers, whilst he retraced his steps through the rough hills, and over the rocky crags where simple sheep—especially lambs—could easily be isolated. Goats were self-saving, but sheep lacked such self-saving sense. His heart almost failed him—time and again—and the shades of a night gripped his spirit inwardly as he searched. Each of his flock had a pet name and he called the name of this lost one time and again, and then suddenly—somewhere—it responded. He heard the faint cry, oriented himself towards it, rushed through the scrub and found it, lost in its own terror, and

embraced it with loving chiding and joyful thanksgiving. On the way back to the fold he envisaged bringing it to his neighbours and friends, and telling them of the wonderful light which had flooded him, and ended his inner anxiety.

She had hunted everywhere—that woman—and had wondered how it could be possible that one of the silver coins of her betrothal jewellery could be so lost. Her anxiety knew no bounds. It was rarely she lit their lamp, for they were not prosperous people. Now she spared no expense and so light it she did, and sweep, sweep, sweep she did, and sieve the dust she did—time and time again until a cry sprang from her lips, and her heart was thrilled with the sight of the recovered coin. Quickly she slipped it back into its accustomed place, tightening the clasp, and then laughing in utter delight. Life had come again to her, and she could not contain her joy. She could not refrain from rushing out to tell her neighbours and friends and from calling them in to her house to celebrate a great occasion—no matter what the expense should be for full hospitality. Her womanly dark night had fled, and joy had come in her morning.

The father of the prodigal was in no way blasé about his son's going from the home. He knew in the depths of his being that the young man would squander the wealth he had been given. Long ago he had seen the look in the eyes of his boy—the one who could not stand the intolerable boredom within the home. Not that the home was essentially boring—the father knew that! It was true that the older brother was not a joyous person, so that perhaps

family fun was minimal, but his son must have known the generous heart of his father—the prodigal heart—or he would not have dared ask for his share of the inheritance. Such a request had not hitherto been known in their culture. Indeed, he doubted it had even been made in any culture! Inheritance is both a sacred and a solemn thing. It is patrimony passed from age to age.

Even so, the father had reasoned that he might win his son by giving him the patrimony which would have eventually been his. It was a daring move, though it would only be seen as foolish by others. He had watched his son go, and knew he could bid farewell to that portion of the inheritance, yet—in a way—the inheritance meant little to him. Certainly it was a minor matter against the larger matter of his love for his boy.

The drama has been enacted millions of times in the history of mankind: the parents both wondering—the mother aching for her child at night, wondering about the moral and physical dangers in which he could be, and the father no less concerned, knowing even more the dangers into which a young man can walk, and the lust and evil in which he can indulge. Time and again the images come up in the minds of the lonely mother and the suffering father. Many nights are empty of sleep and barren of peace and void of joy. There is universally a parental yearning to hear the voice, and to hear the familial cry of ‘Mother!’ and ‘Father!’ This desire is inbuilt, is innate in all who have children, no matter how inadequate they may prove to be as parents.

Many a time he wept—that father. Many a time he went out to the ridge of the hill and looked, but the landscape was always bare of his beloved son. His

time had not yet come. Often in the night the tears would flow—his and those of his wife. They dared not harden themselves against their wayward child. Love must never cease to draw back that child now so dead and lost. Long was the night, and long was the tarrying of the weeping and the sobbing.

Then the miracle happened. He had gone to the ridge of the hill and looked out across the field to the horizon, and his eyes had not deceived him. He knew the walk and lope of his younger son, and he could see—even at this distance—the stumbling of a starving child, and he ran. Arms outwards he ran, and as he ran the weeping of his heart ceased, and the pain of his tortured mind gave way to an incredible peace, and from within welled up an unspeakable joy, and all of it flooded out onto the grown young man as an avalanche of love. The night had vanished and the day was in full light.

Labouring with their hands, strained in their bodies, they thought the end had almost come. They could not go on in this intolerable slavery, this harsh treatment by their masters, and this indignity brought upon their humanity. Yet there was no way out. At the end of their tether, they could, nevertheless, do nothing. Their night was dark and bitter, and they were as exhausted in spirit as they were in body, almost too beaten to know the luxury of weeping.

In the course of those many days the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition.

This was the dark night of Israel's history. Under Joseph and his friend the Pharaoh they had flourished, only to come to slavery under a king who had not known Joseph. Times had changed and the people found themselves in an ironclad bondage. The story of God's deliverance of them is a long, but not a tedious, one. Something of their dark night extended itself through the days of the plagues with which God visited Egypt. Finally came the snapping point, and Pharaoh was glad to see the last of his vast slave force—so pestiferous were they and their God. Yet even at the last he pursued them to the Red Sea in order to destroy them or bring them back, but his army perished in the sea, whilst Israel walked dry-shod to the land and were saved. No Psalm could better fit their liberation than Psalm 126, although it almost certainly does not refer to the Exodus:

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,
'The Lord has done great things for them.'
The Lord has done great things for us;
we are glad.

At the other side of the Red Sea they sang the Song of Moses—a song of liberation. The Song of Moses was followed by the Song of Miriam—the sister of Moses and a prophetess,

Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Again in history God had ended a dark night of weeping and brought a beautiful day of liberation and rejoicing.

I can remember how vivid the 126th Psalm was in my mind when we were liberated from our prisoner of war camp on Singapore Island. As we boarded our hospital ship—the beautiful luxury cruiser *Oranje* with its gleaming white lines and its sumptuous appointments—the Psalm came bounding to my mind, and when we reached Sydney Harbour after a quick journey across the oceans, it was still there—the intense joy of the Psalm. We glided between naval vessels that saluted us with their smart personnel lined up ceremonially for our benefit on deck. A great salute thundered out from the naval guns. Welcoming sirens spelt out their joy as we were royally escorted to the Quay where we were met by tens of thousands who had come to greet their first re-turning prisoners of war. Bands played, flags waved, ticker tape flowed like regal confetti to welcome us right royally, and the crowds screamed with joy and the girls kissed and kissed and kissed.

The long night of weeping was over. The new and wonderful day was certified by such celebration. No wonder the tears streamed down, and no wonder the adrenalin flowed with it all, and no wonder such joy welled up in every one. It was humanity celebrating a living event. It was high joy in the morning. Reunion with loved ones was overwhelming. The night we had known had been dark for them also.

So, too, the story of his resurrection. The Cross took into it the long night of man's evil, of his gloom, doom and guilt. The Cross was the Long Night of the Son of God who had become the Son of man for mankind. For the joy that was set before him he had endured the Cross, despising the shame. Yet it seemed that long and troubled night in those hours

on the Cross had caused his decease for ever. Not so: he went to the spirits in their prison in the night of his death and proclaimed to them the victory of his suffering. On the third day he rose again, and altered history forever. He was the firstborn from the dead. He became the Shepherd who led them up out of death into eternal life. He 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light!' He dissolved the sting of death and he muted the victory of the grave.

Weep then no more, you who once were slaves of sin and Satan, and the tortured prisoners of your conscience. The Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing in his wings. He has disbanded the dark night, and he has brought only tears of joy to the eyes and hearts of his redeemed. He has taught us, too, to understand the dark night of every soul under bondage to sin, and to declare to them their liberation. Weeping has endured for the long night of man's sinfulness but joy has come with the morning of forgiveness and liberation. At first, men and women may not believe for joy, but the revelation will come, and they will know their bonds to fall away, and their glorious freedom to be reality. Their mouths will be filled with laughter and their tongues with singing, and they will say among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for us,' and this indeed will be the case. We must hasten to tell the world, and to witness to them that,

Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

And if we are true lovers of our race we will warn them—those of our fallen people—that it is only he who can dispel the dark night. If they will not have it

dispelled then they must exist forever in that sad and terrible dark night which they have brought upon themselves by their own sin and failure, and by their refusal to be released.

Songs That Break Through

These are the songs that break through
 From the limpid depths, the pellucid deeps
 Of my vagrant mind. Tired in the early
 Or late hours, I sleep. Then awake,
 And creatures of music and delight
 Part the pellucid waters, come to me
 As visitors from the transparent depths,
 From the clear environs of my sleeping,
 Waking mind.

Down there are songs of joy, songs ringing
 As though breaking some womb of pregnancy
 To be born into life, to take on
 Forms of their own, life native to themselves,
 Amazing the mind, astonishing the soul
 And bringing joy unutterable to the Spirit.
 'Joy unutterable' is an old cliché,
 Almost the saying of the mindless mind—
 Crass, thoughtless, repetitious—
 And yet it's true. Songs that are born,
 Poems that come to life, have been given being—
 Life in the unseen heart, the secret place
 Of our strange humanity, the core-place
 Of the human mystery.

Once born, the children clutter
 The father-mother nature of the begetter.
 Some that emerge are sombre and dull,
 Some showing the lineaments of atavistic thought,
 Some almost stillborn,
 Weak yet surviving, whilst others come
 Roaring rumbustious, slapping their sides
 With their self-known, self-sown
 And self-shown humour.
 They delight as children who crowd at the table
 Eating with fun and child humour,
 Whilst others wait silent, spurning
 The crass delights of purposeless humour,
 Waiting days of high magnificence,
 Of revelations of eternal things
 Available to the thoughtful spirit.

I then am amazed.
 I sleep, know the motions
 That wake me at the appropriate point of time
 Of the new begetting.
 Words come in their own array
 And patterns of mystery
 Flowing out of the depths supernal,
 Weaving their way upwards
 To the mind that weeps joy and pain
 At the unbidden new creation.

We were made creatures of love,
 Beings that weave their dreams,
 Yet do not anticipate that the weary mind,
 The sleeping body, the voidful spirit,
 Will awake to voiceless utterances
 And songful entities
 That become the poems and songs

For this generation, making themselves
 Part of the great human heritage,
 Finding their eternal place
 In the ever accumulating treasury
 Bestowed by the concealed Muses
 Or the celestials deputed
 To be the minders of the heads and hearts
 Of writers and composers—they
 Who never cease to marvel at songs in the night,
 And revelations deeper deep
 Than the conscious imaginings
 Of the striving poet,
 The artist stirred, and the attemptive maker
 Seeking songs in the day until night surprises,
 Carrying the spirit to the dawn
 And the dawn to the normal day.

Sindhi Singing in the Night

WHAT brought it back to me was the sound of eastern singing. We were driving through Parkside in Adelaide and the sound was floating out of a house. Outside children were playing on the front lawn. They were dressed in Australian clothing—which these days is just universal clothing. The girls were not in sari or shalwar-chemise. They were throwing a ball, and their laughter was shrill—the same as I had heard every day of our ten years in their former homeland. Some were shouting in Urdu and some in English and no one seemed to notice the difference. Meanwhile the background instruments—the baja, the sitar and the tubla—were accompanying the lilting soul music of the female singer—that has even made its way into modern western music, and its western songs. I am embarrassed before professionals by my non-knowledge of notes, my musical illiteracy—I who can listen with deep appreciation, who can be taken into innumerable fantasies and who can weave folklore whilst the symphony orchestra plays and the conductor guides or urges into ecstasies unutterable. What musicians do not know is that I have heard what probably they have never heard—angels singing.

As I stopped the car and watched and listened I was taken back in time and transported out into the

heat and night of the Sindh desert, that southernmost desert of Pakistan which borders on the rocky, craggy edges of Baluchistan and stretches almost up to Afghanistan—the famous Khyber and Kabul Passes.

My work and pleasure was to speak at meetings, telling the excellencies of the Christian faith to an audience of Hindus—those of the scheduled castes—otherwise known as the lowest castes of the Hindu tribes—virtually outcastes. They had a proud history—a most ancient one—bedevilled only by the invasion of nation after nation which settled like new human strata of smothering lava on the ones below. Each succeeding race would rule all beneath it until the Brahmans took up their positions as holy gods above them all and whose any shadow falling across a lesser caste would bring shame to the one who cast it. All must bow and worship the Brahmans, the gods among humans who deigned to live with them—these lesser mortals whose high privilege was to serve their godlike masters.

All of this was rather wonderful from a cultural point of view as seen in the seething masses of Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Parsees and those who were peasants to their feudal system. The peasant may take it passively but anger lies beneath it all and the coming of western freedom has lit fires that may yet immolate the Indian subcontinent.

Out in that desert there was caste without doubt, but when we gathered to worship, it was, somehow, a different matter. Because of the 1948 Partition, the Hindus had been cut off from their tribes further East, in India, and so they were almost a lost people. Perhaps that was why they flocked to hear the

ancient truths we told them. We, too, were from an ancient eastern religion as old as Abraham and as old and new as Christ. The Pakistani-Indian mind is obsessed with religion, always talking out and about the metaphysics of God and creation and human-kind.

So I would have a good hearing. They would sit on the dhurries laid out on the desert sand, and they would light their little beedies—their cigar-cigarettes that were brown and nutty—or chew their betel nut, and they would wrap their dhotis around their waists, whilst the women in their segregated area would have eyes that were downcast and seemingly shy, hiding beneath their veils. Seen in the day, they would often look ragged and unkempt like people off a slum street, but at night the multicoloured tribal clothing looked to be a thing of beauty under the white light of the hissing gas lamps.

Outside the meetings the desert was silent enough until the pariah dogs began their camp barking and biting, and the feral cats their bitter snarling. It was the high moon which brought some peace as it flooded its light and brought silver to the water of the canals.

As I said, they gave a good hearing, but their minds were working restlessly. Sometimes it would show in their bodies and they would turn and resettle themselves, or wander off to answer a call of nature in the desert acacias, but always they returned. Always they sat and listened.

These Sindhi people had been there for millenniums, and they knew the soil and the sand as well as their own hands. They kept their independence, making their temporary villages from wattle trunks and branches, covering them with straw and clay

mixed—as in ancient times. Sometimes it did not rain in three years, and when the rain came it might be twelve inches in one day. There was no attempt at special architecture, but they were proud of what we would call humpies. They sought to accumulate wealth in the silver trinkets the women wore, and in the flocks of goats and sheep that they nurtured. Here and there a proud chief would have a horse, but these were giving way to bicycles. They lived on sowing and tending and harvesting the crops as tenants of the Moslem overlords—the other tribes of the Sindh who had turned to Islam when the proud Arabs came through. Some of the lords seemed to be pure Arab, whilst others had the thin noble features of a people whose origins were aristocratic but almost forgotten.

Almost forgotten: it is in this my story lies, but for a moment that story will have to wait. The reason for this is the story of the migratory movement of Christian Punjabis from the north. The Punjabi is at heart a truculent fellow, full of self-esteem, alert and clever at making his living wherever he settles. Originally from various castes, an amalgam of these Northern Punjabis produced a serving tribe which was used in every village, hamlet and town. Almost all of these were Christian men and women. They had come into a place under the sun through the early Christian missionaries. They did not care much to remember their own humble beginnings, but they were fierce in their drive for progress, in moving to the upper strata of society which would have been impossible before the British Raj had decreed some social freedom, and the missionaries had aided and abetted that with their schools, hospitals and mission compounds.

The men who took us out into the desert were sturdy Punjabis. They were in some ways more Western than their Sindhi compatriots. It was they who hustled the Hindus into coming, into eating the food provided, and in listening to their speakers. Even so—from the days of the first apostles—preachers had come to these Sindhis with a message which they had incorporated into their Hindu faith. For that reason—so we believed—they had from those days of long ago tattooed crosses into their skins. They had engagement and marriage rituals which seemed to be more Christian than Hindu. Something mysterious always seemed to be below the known tenets and rituals of their own ancient religion. The Christian contribution had been made nearly two millenniums ago, and its outlines had since been blurred, its songs almost muted, its theology virtually lost.

The Punjabis had learned something about time from their western friends. In the desert, timelessness is in the blood of its dwellers, but missionaries were people of action—keepers and worshippers of time. They tended to repeat their back-at-home times and rituals. The songs they sang were foreign to the desert, and even to the towns. The Pakistani instruments took the tunes up and either drew them out to something of a dirge or heartened them to un-usual things of joy. I never ceased to marvel.

The peasants and the Punjabi workers alike seemed to feel their duty was done when they had sung songs, listened to the speaker, and sealed off the meeting with some kind of benediction. It was then they would eat. The Hindus were mainly vegetarian but they would eat *chota gosht*—goat or sheep—and

out of respect no one ate *burdah gosht*—the cow—sacred to their religion and part of their worship. The rich smell of curry and spices would fill the air, and love of these became part of me, so much so that I pass an Indian restaurant only with reluctance these days. Sometimes my wife and I succumb, feeding our stomachs, minds and hearts into and out of the old days.

Some of us from the west would be tired by midnight, and want to retire to our *charpais*. The hot wind of the day—called the *loo*—having swept across the desert would cool down, and the relief from the day-heat would be no less than delicious. It would descend from a fierce 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to a tolerable 80 degrees. So we would sleep.

Not so the Sindhis and the Punjabis. Life seemed to begin for them then. They would cast off the western influences which had shaped their singing and their music, and their indigenous songs and laments would begin. First the Punjabis would sing the sagas they had once been taught which began with Adam and compassed all history. All could sing the entire 150 Psalms of the ancient Jews. They could sing parts of the old Law, and new songs dating from the apostles. They had their own treasury of hymns. Nothing that was foreign would come into their orbit.

The Sindhi Hindus had ancient songs, beautiful folklore, tribal sagas, songs of war, odes of peace, and hymns to their deities. Some would go into trance-like states, and it was evident they were out of themselves—ecstatic as the Greeks would say, that is, 'beside themselves' or 'out of themselves'. Some of

them had chewed on drugs and they went into states of hallucination and the music would beat out that state, partly beautiful, partly weird. Others—quite apart from drugs—recited their proud histories, talking about the ancients and the lost paradises of their primordial culture.

The Sindh itself was once a fertile jungle, and knew tropical rains, and grew a great civilisation, but the quirks of geography and history had changed that. The soil was still rich, and not really much of it was desert sand. With the great barrages built by the British across the Sindh part of the Indus River, the desert had begun to become fertile. Great orchards and farms now flourished between the irrigation canals. Rice was grown, and wheat, which was irrigated. Camel trains and bullock carts began to multiply and caravans would carry and distribute the new produce. Cotton was grown and modern mills were established, and the nature of the desert changed.

Nevertheless, beyond the good roads and the good life were our tribal friends, and it was their singing which soaked itself into me and gave me a love for something which I had once thought weird and intolerable attempts at true music. So I would resist sleep and sit cross-legged and listen to the Punjabis and Sindhis vying with one another in their singing. There was a lot of good-natured and crude humour that passed between them, but there was a sort of reverence for the ancient songs and the mysterious folklore of which they sang.

One night the Punjabi pastor told me to watch the next singer.

'This man is one of our famous itinerate singers,' he said. 'He is a real artist. Watch his throat.'

I have seen great frogs swell with the wonder of their own music, and have noticed how their throat enlarges and the muscles stand out, but what this man did was beyond what I had thought possible for a human. He began a lament in soft tones, and as he did the throat muscles seemed to strengthen themselves. Then suddenly his throat ballooned out, and the music in it changed. It was unearthly but of immense beauty. At first the sight was ugly, but the notes that fled out of him throbbed across the desert in a way that seemed almost supernatural.

When his song died away I found myself trembling. I do not understand the biochemical nature of the impact of such art. I only know that music can be strangely stirring.

The pastor was whispering. 'From birth he is taught to develop his neck and throat muscles.' I cannot explain that ballooning, but it is part of the true musician—a heritage from the past.

I wondered whether such songs could be sung elsewhere than in that desert. As a boy I had written poetry until I thought my heart would break. It brought a mixture of shame and ecstasy. I hid what I wrote, and later I lost it all. Occasionally—as in strange moments in a prison camp—I would write a poem, and all would become soft and gentle as it had never otherwise been. The camp would be lost in a new and beautiful world which would envelop me. Now, in the desert, I realised the beauties of our humanity. I saw how tawdry much of our civilisation had become.

One day, at the excavations of Monji Dero—'the city of the mound'—I saw the civilisation of Abraham's day which had been uncovered. I marvelled at the architecture—houses with kitchens and

bathrooms, sinks, drains and toilet facilities—the planned streets, the central baths, and the artefacts which spoke of a thoughtful and cultured community. In another city—closer to the coast—I saw the out-stretched skeletons of those pierced by the arrows of the invading forces. Both cities spoke of human art and human cruelty, of beauty and of savagery alike. Here, under the silver of the moonlit sky, and the silence of the desert, the tremors of ancient music stirred memories which I had never thought to be mine. Did they come up out of some vast repository of primeval human treasures? It was one of those moments when the unity of Man is told by the trembling sitars, the little hand organ, the percussion steel and the throbbing tubla—the ancient finely-tuned drums of the Indian subcontinent.

I could see the professional singer was as worshipped as are some of our gods of the western music world, but these desert dwellers paid no money to hear him. They fed him, gave him the adulation protocol demanded, but they knew he was trained to be their servant, trained to give them hope in a social and political system that had almost no regard for them, and which had contempt for their—so-called—lowly status without regard for their marvellous history.

As we drove through Parkside, as we halted and listened, and then as we drove on—my wife and I—that part of our past swept back, and with it—to my mind especially—two of many strange happenings.

The first was the night of our farewell from Pakistan. We were going home—forced by happenings within

our family. We had hoped all this would be avoid-able. It was not that we loved another race more: we simply loved people. In essence there is no such thing as racial division. Those who see race do so because they want to do so, and maybe because they fear the unknown. Rightly speaking there is no such thing as multiculturalism. There are just human beings who have lived and loved within various cultures. At heart humanity is the same. It is true that culture becomes beloved, that it is—rightly enough—home to those who have lived in it, but Man is one, and from one. So we wanted to stay on but this was unavoidably the night of our farewell.

We had become used to the ways of people expressing their thoughts. No one ever adulated another in our hearing. At our going they felt free to adulate, but in it was no trace of flattery, no insincerity. Tears kept coming to all of us. Our children had played with Pakistani children, and they had a lingo that was a mixture of many languages—the lingo talked in the market place and the joy of illiterates. Some of the community who were not poets had had poems come into their minds—probably out of the ecstasy of their love, for their love was simple and it was genuine. What person knows the extent of love and the power of its happenings?

A few sang songs which had been created in them and now came from them. They passed on the quiet beauty of what had been born of them. We kept holding back the tears, wanting it to be finished because of the high level of intensity, and yet never wanting it to conclude because of its gentle glory.

It had to finish. The Bishop—a former Hindu businessman whose semi-blindness had been miraculously cured by weeping over Christ's agony on the

Cross—said gently, 'I think we will ask our beloved friend to give us his blessing and close off this wonderful time.'

Giving blessing may be a simple thing, but it is also one of the most ancient forms of inviting joy, peace, serenity and love to come to the human heart. As I thought about that something happened within me—the person who knows nothing of music but who feels it all, everywhere.

I began to sing. The song was in Urdu, but its utterance was not western. It was not—I discovered later—even modern Pakistani singing. Certainly it was not western, and it was a solo—something I had never thought to attempt. Western people under great emotion often express their joy and adoration in Gregorian chant. Those who are given to analysing phenomena—especially musical phenomena—might say I drew from some ancient and universal treasury of song. I am not at all sure about that. I simply knew I was singing, and the words kept coming of their own accord, and I wondered at their coming, remained under reverent astonishment at their beauty, and knew that I who had never sung alone, was singing as never I had sung.

The five hundred faces looked up at me with astonishment, and with a kind of delighted awe. I saw some Europeans who did not understand Urdu—the language structured by the Moguls—shake their heads, and I knew why. Even in the midst of singing I knew I understood their astonishment. I was aware that my singing was in the metier of the east and not of the west. The indescribable lilting, the flowing and ebbing, the lament and the inexpressible joy—all these united.

The song, too, was a saga. It was a saga of love and

of suffering. It entered into the interminable suffering of the ancient continent, but also into the suffering of God. I was telling us all that true pain is love; that true love is pain, but at the same time it was all joy. Where mystery is, there humanity is not only intrigued but given hope. Something lies both with-in and beyond the tangle. At least, this was what I was singing and I know that, for the words are still with me. As I sang I did not know what words were coming, and when they went they were replaced by others wholly unanticipated.

I watched the tears come into eyes—just about all eyes, I think. Certainly in mine, and when the song came to its destined end it had done its destined work, and we all sat for a long time in that silence which a poet once said is ‘the silence of eternity interpreted by love’.

When the silence broke some drifted towards me, and others broke ranks and rushed up to me.

‘Oh, sahib,’ they said, ‘how could you sing that great song? How could you sing in our old way, in the way of our old folklore? None of us sings like that today—none of us. That kind of music belongs to a thousand years ago—or more. We have the memory and broken pieces of old songs, but yours was a beautiful and wonderful whole.’

Close Pakistani friends nodded. They affirmed what was being said. They were astonished, if not stunned. No one seemed dazed, for somehow the ancient peace—*shalom* in Hebrew, *itminan* in Urdu—seemed to have claimed us all. There was a quietness and quivering among us.

As I said, some brilliant analysts may have an explanation but no one can really explain the event which happened. They might as easily interpret the

tears and joy which came with the music. None of this matters: it happened. It just did happen.

The second event was linked with the first. It happened much further north than the city of Hyderabad where we had been farewelled. After our farewell we travelled as a family through the famous Khyber Pass where the British troops fought an unending battle with the fierce Hills’ tribesmen, who were mainly Pathans. These strong and warlike horsemen claimed to be descended from the tribes of Benjamin. Their fair-skinned women supported them in their intention to refuse the British yoke, just as many decades later they refused the yoke of Communism within Afghanistan. We went through the Kabul Pass—an even steeper and more dangerous pass than the Khyber—and having seen Kabul and Afghanistan we returned by plane to Peshawar, and the family made its way back to Hyderabad by train whilst I travelled in the heat of the heart of summer to Rahim Yar Khan in a bus that had not even heard of airconditioning and which was packed from stem to stern, whilst luggage and other passengers rode on top.

There was a bit of a contraction of the heart as we drove towards Rahim Yar Khan. Here an indigenous movement of spiritual revival had broken out amongst the Christians and it was deeply affecting both Moslems and Hindus. Folk crowded to see the unusual happenings, so unusual that I will not attempt to describe them in this story. They would certainly have baffled the most intelligent analysts who deal in seemingly supernatural matters.

Some of the leaders within the movement were former students of mine, and I was greeted warmly,

and immediately took in the atmosphere which was sheer joy overlaid with an incredible love.

Most impressive was the disappearance of any caste-tinge. These renewed people stood strong and tall in a recovered humanity. The oppression of centuries had fallen away from them. Folk of other castes and faiths had begun to hold them in awe. It was into this confidence I came for a couple of hurried days before returning to Hyderabad and then to Australia.

It was the singing which was most impressive. The musical instruments seemed to have been impregnated with a life of their own, and the players and singers seemed welded into one. It was almost a magical thing: folk flocked in from the desert to the semi-urban, semi-rural centre. Some strange power surged into the community, and at nights the meetings went for four or five hours, and the singing was from sunset to dawn.

It was in the last meeting that the singing seemed as it had never been before. The rhythm, the beat, the silver sound of the sitars, the clashing of the cymbals, the merriment of the khanjari and the rattling boom of the tubla certainly stirred the spirit of the vast con-gregation who, having been well fed, were seated cross-legged on an open and well-grassed arena. Throughout the meeting there were interruptions when high cries of surprise would break out—surprise at sudden releasings within their spirits as free-dom came flooding in. The theologian in me is tempted to rationalise these happenings, but what caused a high cry in my own spirit was the sound of angelic music and singing that I heard away to the left of me—far away from the meeting as not to be in it.

It was at the time when I was talking. I talked but the celestial choir was no interruption. If anything it caused a rising up within me that was unique in my life. It was a background to the remarkable things that were happening in our meeting. The minds of us all were in a special state and without doubt it could be called ecstatic, but then there was no confusion, no mass hysteria, no deliberate use of hype, no thought or attempt to sway the thinking and actions of the people. What was happening was coming to us from outside of us. Certainly the angelic singing was part of this.

To this day I do not know whether anyone else heard what I heard. No one has reported hearing it, and I never asked the question of another. To the sceptical I have nothing to say but reportage. I agree that 'in the natural' the reportage sounds exaggerated, and even phony, but it happened! Such events never leave the inner man of a person: they are there, forever.

Years later a man who dealt with unusual singing and music came to question me regarding the matter. Someone had told him I had heard supernatural singing, and he wanted to know about it. He had his pen and pad ready to write down all the details. It was like a miner discovering a full rich lode of gold ore. In fact he was almost trembling as he asked his questions. I saw him trying to transcribe into rational terms the experience I had had. I was in no mood to explain or defend the happening. In one way of speaking I told him everything, and in another way I told him nothing. He was baffled, and even a bit angry.

The person who deals as often as possible with the supernatural—as he or she would call it—is either a

sceptic or one vulnerable to the ecstatic states. All of us have our reasons for belief or disbelief, but none of these things has troubled me. What I heard was what I heard, and it was indescribable. It is not that I have not attempted to describe it: I have, but without any success. Even at this moment of writing I can tell you that it was music that transcended the best I have heard. It was of another quality than human voices can accomplish, and as for instrumentation—I cannot describe it since singing and music were blended into one. The great Paul once mentioned ‘the tongues of men and of angels’ as though there were different ways of vocalising. It may be that he had heard angels sing.

After some hours the meeting concluded. At least I sought to close it off with a benediction, and the great crowd hushed their spirits and bowed, but—as at Hyderabad, so here—the song in ancient metier began flowing from my mouth. It was not that I remembered what had been sung at Hyderabad and tried to repeat it. It was that song, but new and fresh, not confined to the previous poetry but free in its movements. Again it issued from itself but through me, a person never noted for his singing, but its source was from beyond me—certainly beyond my conscious control although I was in no trancelike state or in any special way of being ecstatic.

What was remarkably different about the singing from that at Hyderabad was that the hundreds of seated listeners spontaneously joined in from the first words that were sung. None of them had been at Hyderabad, and not one knew the song, but—as in my own case—they sang, not knowing what the next words would be, but nevertheless singing them in

unison. It was as though we all constituted some underground ocean which was now welling up, breaking out, and flooding the night with its passion, pathos and its beauty. No one played an instrument. All sang unaccompanied—without obbligato—and I suppose it was the closest that was humanly possible to the angelic harmony that preceded it. It was a euphony like heaven flooding the wide earth, and making new the wide world.

As I have said, such times and happenings are inexplicable, and are best left that way. One thing was apparent, and that was that the whole audience was a sea of love. This time no one said it was the ancient music and how was the song derived, for they sang it together, knowing it in the same way that I was caught in it.

What happened after that is history that does not at all concern this story. It was simply that in the singing we knew all we needed—and have ever wanted—to know. That was it.

So driving through Parkside suburb, and seeing the children playing, and hearing the Pakistani folk music float from that suburban home stirred memory and brought a rich recall. Even the recall is as powerful as the happening. As for angelic music, and angelic singing, that will never wane in its beauty and its glory, being as it is, timeless.

Credo and Confession

—a Love Memoir

WHAT does a man do who has known three loves almost from birth, maybe even from within the womb? His first love was—and is—of God—an everlasting *amour* that never once knew hate. The second was—and is—a passion scarcely less than the first for the good earth, along with love for the sea and the sky. The third love affair has always been with writing, personal writing, writing about everything. I ask, 'How does a man live with three loves as though they were lovers who would never let him go, any more than he would even dream of relinquishing them?'

Of course these three loves brought others with them. Because he was—and is—a man, he loved women, and in particular—and finally exclusively—one woman, having known her for most of his life, being married to her for forty-five years, still loving her in the present. In fact, he could never tot up the list and complete it, of his many loves within the three great loves. Such included the human race with its varied members, some of whom he had hated at first, until the hate dissolved in its own shame, and the living image of the God he loved shone through in spite of the evil that is in every human creature.

A man who has such great loves may think of himself as a paragon of love, in which case he had better be wary of human pride. The strange thing about love is that it cannot truly exist except in humility, and humility is something no person on earth can ever bring into being. There is a sly humility which is simply inverted pride. There is a grovelling spirit which hates what it grovels before. True love does things that lusty *eros* can never accomplish—*eros*, that kind of love which man brings to birth out of his calculating ego.

So why so late in life do I appear to be complaining about my three loves, these bedfellows of my heart, these invaders and possessors of my mind? In reality I have no complaints regarding them, but I blame them for the endless hours of uneasiness I have known because of them. It is a strange thing to love God in a world which often sets its hatred upon Him in the ways it knows how to do. I have enough theology to know that I love Him because He invaded me somewhere at the point of my conception in the womb and he chose a strange yet wonderful pair to bring me out into the world—a father of English descent who for his own reasons kept away from church, but lived with some inherited puritan compulsion, and a mother who was no less puritanical, but who had her own love affair with God even though not allowed to go near a church. Why did my irreligious father have us all baptised—his nine children, I mean? Why did he choose a cathedral for the event? Why does God set His mind upon a person from his conception to his ultimate casket, and, of course, even beyond that?

How does a man live with a love that was born of his father's silent passion for land—a dental surgeon

who retired to build a vast garden—with its lawns and fountains, shrubberies and miles of rose beds, vegetables and fruit trees? Why did the same father —restless for more—insist on exchanging even this for a famous old homestead with its cattle and stud pigs, its cultivation of crops, its storage silos and hay sheds? Why does a man do this to a boy who is entranced at the sight of a cow calving, a sow giving birth to innumerable piglets, a clucking Orpington crowded with its clutch and a Muscovy duck leading its line of yellow progeny to the farm dam? Some-times I could explode with the huge unfairness of it all.

The most unfairness is the love set in a man to write. How can he write freely when he has theology burning at the back of his brain? How can he reconcile his love for the Lake Poets and the new fresh balladists of his southern country, and the batch of storytellers that haunt his continent when he is predestined to tell his peers of the divine love he has discovered: rather, the divine love which has discovered him? That love makes mockery of his adolescent prurience—his passionate fantasies—and shapes him in an unenviable pulchritude—a love of beauty that leaves him gasping, a knowledge of mystery that makes him little less than a priest of the Muses. What is it that makes him stand on the hill of the pastures he loves when the sun is burning itself away in late evening orgy—a riot of bloody beauty—when in him he wants to travel other countries hotfoot and tell them of the *agape* of the God they dread or hate or misunderstand?

Surely no man has been invested with a more terrible life because of the seemingly irreconcilable triune loves that he has! One love makes him

impassioned to open the beauties, terrors, mysteries and vagaries of human living in prose or poetry in a way that will catch the minds of men and women, and make them see that life is too rich to destroy it, too marvellous to be unexcited about it, too promising to let it drivel down to dreary rejection, futile anarchy, sterile nihilism. Another love bids him depart the silly scene of human corruption, of precise suburbanism—as though there were ever such a thing!—the cancerous consumerism, the cacophony of laughter born of the prurient, and a materialism that voids the treasures of true art, and of a wild sound that mocks the beauty of authentic music.

Pity the man then, for no sooner does he decide to go back to the soil and let his sweat wet the curling furrows created by the cutting disks or mouldboards, than he wants to hunt the haunts of prostitutes, druggies and junkies, and tell them of the treasures of a love that is stronger than death and which will break through their angers and hatred, bitterness and resentments and set them free to walk in light—no matter what darkness will often fall athwart it! Pity the man, I say, because all three loves distract him, one from the other and all from each.

It is not as though his life has not been beset with confusion. No sooner has he begun to publish his stories than he is whisked off to a war, fully convinced that the men in the trenches will want to know the love of God before they go over the top to killing and being killed. No sooner has he outstripped—at least in his own mind—the war poets he knows, and the writers he has loved than he is caught up in one of the most demoralising capitulations the proud British have ever known. Incarcerated

in a prison camp, he discovers freedom beyond any he has known, and the new love from God—and thus for God—dwarfs anything he has known. His loves do not leave him to rot in the diseases which come to him, the body which has been damaged by battle, but three of them come alive more than ever—each in its own way. So he is dogged to tell men of his faith, to write of the beauty of a prison camp, and of the inner heart of men who outwardly seem often to be so corrupted, but who amaze his theology with ethical contradictions. He puzzles his way through the ethical and the aesthetic and almost has his three loves as an indivisible triunity, when suddenly physical liberation almost unnerves him and he explodes with poems and prose pieces and can scarcely wait to rejoin the ones he has loved.

This is the mystery: there is never peace. The only peace he knows is in the constant conflict. There are loves for which he has contempt, and loves for which he has worship. In huge gulps he will take in the soil of his land revisited, and at the same time mingle with its poets and writers as though at last he has come to his own true home. But divine love taps on his shoulder, yet not as though it is there for the first occasion anymore than for the millionth time. So love for the soil, and love for writing, and love for divine love all grip him at once. Now he seems torn apart by the conflict they bring, and then—now—he is all at one as though the three reconciled bring him into a joy scarcely less than delirious, and make him stronger than when living in any one of them at any other time.

Something has happened to him. He knows that for him there are no irreconcilables. He marvels at the

woman who is his wife because she seems almost always to have known about the unity of the triune loves. She has followed him through all the tempestuous struggles, and the unsettling doubts, the changes of mood, and the love vortexes into which he has been swept—almost to death—until amazing grace sweeps him out to safety and to new conflicts. So pity the man, and yet do not pity him. Have great contempt for this divided person, and yet marvel that he keeps arriving at unity amidst the irreconcilable and the seemingly incompatible. So it works like this: now you pity him, and now you don't.

Pity him still because along with all who love and tell after his fashion, his actions will be interpreted—or misinterpreted—through cynicism, carelessness of discernment, unbelief at his naivete and idiocy in a shrewd and calculating world which is weary of idealism, bored by beauty, rendered indifferent by unrealised ambition, even bitter and angry, or just benumbed and senseless within its environment. Critics are the greatest need of artists but then critics have to keep their own integrity. They must not ride on the backs of their legitimate objections of the 'I-thou' compact. The high honour of their discernment is meant to be at the service of listeners, viewers, readers and observers. The artist interprets all he sees and knows and the critic interprets the artist, and the flow of both comes to men and women and gives them understanding and even wisdom—all of which may even lead to love. It matters not how flawed the artist is, for along with other humans he needs grace to create. It matters not how much our three-love person wrote or toiled or lived in part confusion, something had to emerge. The triad of

love brings a harvest of richness, a cornucopia of luxuriant fruitfulness. Whether this *seen* is seen or remains unseen, whether this is recognised and praised or left to be part of the irreversible and irremovable treasury of human accomplishment does not matter. Even spoken or sung into the air its chords will never die away. The critic had better lay down his life upon this score and not fumble.

Even so, never let your pity die away. He—or she—who persists in pity is one with him who endeavours. The toil may be in pain or joy but never is ‘Fame . . . the spur that the clear spirit doth raise’, if the writing and the proclaiming and the uplifting of the toil is to be authentic. This trinity of power and joy must have its own way, not only for the man and posterity, but because it is the *esse* of life, the predestined reality amongst all the other destinies that are in the treasure-house of man’s history and deigned to be the luggage and the glories of the holy city, without which humanity has no goal or future or divine *telos*.

All the above, of course, has a story to it. A three-tiered set of autobiographical volumes could—and yet may—tell the saga of the unending struggle within the one person of the triad of loves that have always possessed him. Had he pursued only one love with constant fidelity then some kind of assurance and peaceful integration might have come to him. If fame had been his spur then he might have achieved some high goal. What an agriculturalist he may have become, or what a theologian or what a writer among the greats! But, as he discovered, there are the politics of agriculture, the politics of writing,

and the politics of theology. There are the politics of everything. Each discipline is jealously guarded: there is fierce competition among the elite of each coterie, whilst the critics stand watching on the sidelines—a coterie within a coterie, each watching for his own thing. The upward clambering of desperate spirits tramples underfoot the non-political ones or the weaker ones among the political. One must be the dedicated devotee—the loyal lover of one love alone—and then he must await his turn in the queue that shuffles hopefully towards its destined end.

His problem—indeed his story—was that he made a resolution at one point of life, tucking away the writer in a backroom of his mind, and holding the soil-love at bay whilst he pursued what men call theology, which in essence is telling of love through love, albeit this is often met with howls and jeers and sceptical laughter, or with arid stony silence if not with cruel forms of backlash. It is still a vocation and would seem to have rewards even beyond all others. When, however, in a later time, he set free the writer from his backroom in which he had been fed with good morsels from other writers through those long years; and when he released the lover of soil, seasons and rural liberty, then suddenly there were pointing fingers, and a bit of jeering, albeit some of which was kindly.

‘Old man,’ they said with laughter, ‘do you think to come into your own as a writer after having lived in virtual apostasy all these years?’ They really meant, ‘You have forsaken one love for another. You hope to recover the years you have lost, but how dare you rejoin our ranks when we have borne the heat and burden of the day? You have forfeited your

vocational right and you are too late to make it to fame.'

Farmers are of a tougher breed, and have little jealousy for their trade. The human race has always had its rurality in fits and starts. Rundle Mall or George Street farmers have been permitted their hobbies and here he was left alone: time would tell in his case. The elitists in theology, as also those in literature, made their silent statements, 'Do not dare to abandon what you have begun and followed in these years. It is all or nothing with us. No man can serve two masters—or mistresses. Be one-eyed or go blind old fellow, for all we care, but there is to be no strutting upon our stages. What is more, be your age old stager, your true self—one or t'other.'

It was not that he minded so much what they said or did, but he was jealous for the freedom of the human spirit. Long ago he had learned the discipline of the spirit—the writer must bow to, and be in the service of, the theologian. So must the rural love, and each must face outwards to the others, and then inter-dwell one another, mutually. This, for him, had become the true triad. This was the power of life and this was the meaning of true wisdom, and true wisdom is really love in action. It had taken a triad-life to learn this towards the last. Now all he wanted to do was live the rich years without fame being any spur, and without politics having any part, and without being thought a Rip van Winkle *redivivus*.

True enough, he looked for the kind, delighted and true critic. He looked for the good commendation of the wise elders and the discerning youngsters. He wanted the human race to be a brotherhood of love and not hesitant in sharing the divine *agape*,

and as such to salute him. He held the strong hope that the divine image in man—by grace—would defeat the corrupt, the mean, the ego-seeking and the horrible. He looked for the holy city to come to be in the making—presently, ever presently—in the human city of the now time. So he continued to draw out of his treasure-trove—accumulated through the years of storm and tempest—whether or not these things will be recognised with joy and used with delight.

So—in one way—there is no need to pity this man who is painfully surprised at the bric-a-brac of his post-Rip van Winkle awakening, but who is wise enough to know that there is surely nothing new under heaven, although there is always the surprise of that which comes upon this horizontal world from above, shattering its horizontality and bringing to it the things unseen which give it its own verticality.

Nevertheless pity the man, for after many days pity will also come to you, returning—as it were—in the times of dire need, since we all live in the same world which has its own destiny in, and as, the holy city.

Beloved Restorer

(Jeremiah 33:1–9; cf. Hosea 11)

'I will restore your hard heart,' says the Lord,
'To the joy that it knew in those days,
With praise that arose and the worship you gave
When grace was before you always.

'The soul that was dull and the mind
that was pained
Found solace in love that was poured
From Calvary's source to the heart of your heart,
And the glory once Man's was restored.

'My bosom was warm to your coldness of soul,
You melted in gentle surprise.
Tears gushed at the joy, and laughter was born
To flow like a stream from your eyes.'

Creation was new to the eyes that then saw
What only beloved ones know—
The glories of God in the heavens above,
His beauty in all that's below.

There was love in the heart that never had been—
A love that embraced all our race;
All enmity melted, all rancour dissolved,

And anger full banished through grace.
Such joy is a wonder to those who behold it
But enmity holds to its hate,
And evil grows strong in the anger that's long
Till it roars like a river in spate.

God's loved are its objects to bring into sorrow,
To seduce till their love is forlorn
Like a dew that must melt in the burn of the noon
And all its fair promise be gone.

As Israel in splendour grew careless of wonder,
Forgetting the glories of grace,
It turned to new idols expending its worship,
Befouling its heart to a waste.

The love that's eternal brings judgement of sinning,
Brings horror where idols hold sway,
Till spirit revolts at the sight of its evil
And weeps for the Lord it betrays.

Then He who has loved us with mercy eternal
Brings cleansing that makes us anew;
His love is so pure we gladly endure
The scourge of the judgement that's true.

'Tis then that we love the hand that chastises,
The eyes that must banish disgrace;
'Tis then we believe the promise of Yahweh
That tells of His mercy and grace,

'I will restore your hard heart,' says the Lord,
'To the joy that it knew in those days,
With praise that arose and the worship you gave
When grace was before you always.'

Somebody Has to Stay at Home

IT WAS a strange thing to find myself arguing with God. What I remember was that we were both sitting at a coffee table, He on one side and I opposite Him, and we were arguing. Well, not exactly arguing, because He was insisting on something, and He had in His hand a parcel wrapped in brown paper, and it was oblong. He kept pushing it towards me, and when I refused to put out my hand and take it He would withdraw it a little and tap on it with His finger, as though He was thinking, because what was in the parcel was an excellent present, and at the moment, full of mysterious wonder. I both sensed and knew that, but yet I was not interested in taking the proffered package because I knew that—wonderful as it may have been—my receiving of it had certain conditions attached. So I kept my hands on my lap and kept discussing the matter from my point of view.

He was patient enough, as I fully understood. I knew that He had always been patient, even though from our point of view—as humans—He often seemed sudden death. This is not said with disrespect to God since He is constant life and can never be sudden death. By ‘sudden death’ I mean that He has the world in His control and yet the most horrible things happen, the things we all know about

and bemoan, or just become angry with Him because of them, and think that in His omnipotence He ought to be able to handle things better.

Well, as I was intimating, we were both sitting at this coffee table. It didn’t look particularly celestial, and it certainly wasn’t just terrestrial because there was no earthly thing on it. It was, in fact, a plate glass coffee table with a wooden frame and legs. As I also said, here was God almost playing with the present which He kept moving backwards and forwards across the table. I sensed that He knew what He was doing, and that He was not surprised at my refusal to take the present, although—in one sense—it was not outrightly offered. He was holding it for and until the moment I was ready to take it.

When I was very young I would have liked an occasion like this one. I had often visualised myself talking with God about the mess the world was in. When I look back, even as I am writing this account, I smile gently at my youthful vigour, my rare brilliance concerning the state of handling the world, and the suggestions I would have wished to offer. I am rather glad that we sat at no coffee table in those days, and God was not just opposite me. Of course, like millions before me, and billions after me, I was going to put God straight because He was a bit outdated, and not quite up to the times, and was refusing to use His power in the way I thought He ought to. Also the picture of Him being ancient, and having white hair—primitive enough symbol as it was—made me feel He needed to modernise Himself and as we used to say ‘get with it’. Notice that I am talking about the time when I was very young and was not permitted to speak at any coffee table with Him.

Anyone reading this story will smile if he has even a smidgin of humour in himself. A mortal man must always be silent before the Eternal, but then in certain moods we feel we have a good case and only wish for a coffee table and the opportune moment. I am glad it had never happened.

Even so, and in what you might call my latter part of life, I found myself saying to God as He was thoughtfully tapping His oblong present, 'Many is the night I have awakened and found the world on my heart.'

He nodded at that, as though He knew, and sympathised with me.

'I have looked out into the darkness through a window,' I said, 'and I have thought of the homeless and their starving and I have felt for them. I have shivered where they shivered, but in the warmth of my own home. I have felt one with the prisoners and captives of unjust political systems, and the utter cruelty tormentors can show to their fellow hu-mans.'

I looked at God. 'Oh God,' I said, 'how I have wept.'

He inclined his head in sympathy. 'I have known that all the time,' He seemed to say. 'I have loved your tears and your pain, and I would greatly have liked to comfort you with some clever thought that would have helped you to rationalise it and go back to bed and soon be sleeping without weeping, but that would have been foolish. The human race needs to weep for the human race.'

I scarcely heard what He seemed to be saying because I had always wanted to lay the matter before Him.

'I used to think You had the power to do any-thing,' I said, and I saw the silent agreement in His

eyes which was wise in a kind of sorrow I had never known. I dared not try to understand this because I had something very important in mind, and knowing all about His power might have deflected me from my course, so I hurried on.

'I would sit and read the words You were said to have sent mankind—you know, the prophecies, the intimations, the wrappings of the mysteries.'

My eye fell on the oblong parcel, and I sensed it was one of these mysteries, maybe the final one, and even the most glorious one, but I sensed the danger of stopping at this point and so I hurried on.

'I wanted to tell all I knew about You, because what I knew had deeply affected my life. I had not failed to read the mystery of Calvary—the suffering of You and Your Son and the strange silence of the Spirit which spoke stronger words than Man has spoken in the wonderful transcendence he sometimes seems to experience.'

Again the nodding, the gentle acquiescence, the acceptance of my reasoning, the patient hearing me out. For this I was grateful although it was not the first time I had poured out such things before Him when the nearness had been even less, and there had been no coffee table conference. All of this comforted me, gave me further boldness, and let me lay the whole matter out before Him. So I continued, glad to let the pressures I had known in a whole life time just ease themselves out before Him. I repeat, this was not the first time, but it was the time closest to Him, the closest, ever. And it was all so real.

I said ruminatively, 'If ever I had a complaint it was this, that I had to stay at home.'

There was a silence, but it was not because of His misunderstanding, but for my working it out before

Him, being allowed to play it out to the end—so to speak—so that I could understand.

‘You see,’ I told Him, ‘I never really wanted to stay at home. I wanted to be out where the action was. I wanted to *do* something, accomplish something, relieve the situation, and somehow change the course of history so that Man could change and peace and joy and gentleness could come to every human heart and dwell in every human mind.’

I sensed no opposition, but I heard no applause. He was letting me run on.

‘I was always so helpless, even though I had successes of sorts. I am grateful for those, of course. I have never gotten over the intense joy I would know when another would come into Your joy. I always knew You were—and are—a joyful God. I knew You never distanced Yourself from man. Christ is the assurance of that, and so there were good times, many good times. Even so, I never wanted to stay at home.’

‘Where did you really want to go?’ came the quiet question. I felt that if He didn’t understand that matter without an answer from me then I would die of frustration and disappointment. I knew He knew, and this seemed to imply that my passion to help the poor, the needy, the twisted and the lonely was really of no great importance, but I knew this could not really be the case.

He tapped the parcel for the umpteenth time and said calmly, ‘You really ought to receive this little gift with gratitude, open it, and find the answer to your interminable questions.’

At that I flushed red and protested. ‘I know I will find the answer if I open Your package. I always knew You to have had the answer, but to open it

means I will be finished with my present life. I will become part of Your eternal goal for me—for us. I will know even as I am known, and that will be wonderful, yet let such be all in good time.

‘Dear God, great Father,’ I pleaded, ‘even if I don’t want to stay at home, I don’t want to come to this home, until it is the right moment. I know You think it is the right moment, because here we are together—more than I ever dreamed could happen—but the lost and the lonely are still there, and there is much I have learned from Your wisdom, and I wish to continue to be in the human stream, even if my little efforts are relatively feeble.’

Did I imagine a faint smile, a gentle touch of sympathy, and even a non-patronising empathy? No: I don’t think I imagined it, and so I took heart.

‘One day,’ I said, ‘recall me to this coffee table, and let me open Your special gift, but for the moment let me be where I am and do what I have been doing, even if I have to stay at home.’

‘Someone has to stay at home,’ He said. ‘All can’t be out there doing the great things, the special things, the famous things and the overwhelming acts.’

I was stopped in my tracks. I was startled in my thinking. I was confronted by this new thought.

I actually babbled on. ‘You know,’ I said, ‘that I fought against trying to be famous. Milton’s words were ever on my lips, “Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise . . . to scorn delights and live laborious days.” I always knew I could want to be famous. I used to hear Your words to Baruch ringing in my ears, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not,” and strove to work for love and not fame; work with love and not desire fame, and I admit it was an endless battle. I wanted You, one day,

to praise me. I coveted that more than the praise of men, but at the same time I envied those who had left home for the great highways. I would read of their great adventures, their exotic adventures, their wide citizenship of the world, their travelling, their meeting with the powerful ones, their writing, their art, their grand music, their rich maturity. I? Why I seemed so pathetic, so domesticated, so much a home-person. There was so little of greatness in me. Indeed I saw no greatness. I wished to know what was good to know, do what was so right to do, think what was so wise to think and act in the true ways to the world in which You placed me.'

Again the gentleness, the understanding, but again the smile that crumbled my high protest until it was a simple murmur, and almost without point.

'If he stays at home who should stay at home,' He said quietly, 'then it is he who accomplishes the will that matters. As for the pain and the suffering, the injustice, and the hurt, the cruelty and the wound-ing—none of this is lost. If in any way it is lost it is because it has not been received gift-wise. It is be-cause its necessity has not been accepted. All human beings are saviours at heart when they are being truly human, and yet saving can be a prideful thing human beings do. Being in My very image they can seek to go beyond that image to be Me, Myself.'

I knew then that if I took the neat little parcel, if I unwrapped its brown paper and opened the box that I would know, and then I would not wish to return home. It was in that moment I saw how rich it was to be domestic, to live with and in the human race, and yet not be a messiah. I guess I had always known that there could be only one true Messiah, and that—whether home or abroad—he must be the saviour,

the healer, the determining Lord, the intimate brother, the great warrior and the final judge and liberator.

Part of me wanted the package. The other part wanted to be at home—at home to the world. 'Wherever one is,' I thought to myself, 'there one can be at home to the world—to all of the human race.' I thought of the gift of love that somehow flows from the humblest of sources, the gifts of telling that somehow find ears to hear even amongst all the deliberate non-hearers, and I thought of the hours that the hungry come to talk, and to listen and finally find themselves knowing—knowing at last.

As I now remember the occasion, I did not even touch the package. Him? Well, I had not of course seen Him with my human eyes, but I had known it was He, and I had talked with Him as often I had talked, weeping on my knees or astounded at what I heard as His word came through print and sense in that depth we have, but which we do not really know.

It was not that I rejected the parcel, or that it was withdrawn from me. We both knew it was not yet the hour, and whilst I doubt that my relief matched His understanding, I bowed in awe and gratitude and wept for the joy of the return.

I just kept nodding my head and saying—time and again—'Someone has to stay at home,' and with that I left the matter in His hands and hastened back—quite joyfully—to the domestic things, which are the true things of God and Man—He being Father, and us being His children, and His Son being our brother, and all that! I mean everything in the home is a family thing, and to all in the home He is Father. That is now enough for me.

Full Forgiveness

Staring up from his couch
 The paralytic sees the man standing,
 Looking down with calm compassion.
 Around are the crowd, filling the room,
 Staring with hostility at the man,
 And at him, too, all huddled in his weakness.
 Sickness they dislike since it's a plague that reminds
 Of the God from whom all sickness flows,
 As also—and indeed—all health.
 In his eternal tiredness he senses—
 This one of constant illness—
 The paralysis of no hope, paralysis of guilt,
 Guilt that desensitises hope for hope.
 Seeing the eyes of the other he flickers into life,
 But the perpetual enmity of the healthy
 Is as a wave of darkness, a load of heaviness
 Seeking to extinguish the faint flame
 Born of those gazing eyes of him.

Yet he is not alone. The men are there
 Who lowered him through the flat roof,
 Displacing the tiles, disturbing the crowd
 Whose eyes turn upwards and follow the lowering
 Until they are fixed upon him now on the floor,
 On the couch of his bed—the place of lying.
 They have hope, but hope it is to accuse,
 Hope to deflate the teacher-man from his mission

And demean him in the eyes of all.
 Yet the friends who lowered him have hope
 And with their hope is faith.
 They wait with withheld breath for him—
 the Master—
 Trusting his lips to say some healing word.
 'Tis more than rumour this strong claim that he
 Messiah is and is Davidic Son, Davidic King,
 The hope of captive Israel tribes,
 Albeit in concealing veils and seeming anonymity.
 'Ah! He will heal!' they say who love,
 Whose friendship is the only life
 The paralytic knows.

The firm but gentle eyes are warm with love,
 Though stern with knowledge of the inner guilt.
 Breathless he waits—the needy one—
 Until the words are spoken, words of cheer.
 'My son,' they say, 'take heart. Live life.
 The past is gone. Your sins forgiven are.'
 Bewilderment is his—the man's—
 but knowledge too,
 Quick sharp returning of the times now past
 With flooding shame, and crushing pain,
 Yet in the moment of their return
 All cancelled are of shame and pain and guilt.
 He feels the strange release spread through his soul
 Though pinioned still he is, confined to couch,
 Hearing the mutterings and the tirade rise
 To protest high against such blasphemy
 They hear from him who claims he's 'Son of Man'.
 High indignation cries against the man.
 'None has authority—none on this earth—
 None can forgive but God.'

His smile is strong, his gaze is sure,
 Stronger than all the doctrine that is theirs.
 'None can forgive?' he asks, serene,
 'Yet one there is who can forgive.
 Sins bring the past to present but forgiven
 They lose their substance. All the burden held
 Dissolves to lightsome nothingness.
 Where guilt is gone then health is come.
 You who accuse now listen close.
 This man forgiven shall rise up
 To prove in health all new and full,
 The grace of Him Who is our God.'

They marvelled as they saw the man arise,
 Take up his bed. They staggered back as in his joy
 He charged the entrance, filled with life;
 Fled on to home to tell the news
 Of sins forgiven, of life returned.
 Totality of life's a gift of God:
 Forgiveness heals the past,
 And makes the present joy,
 And hope is set for all eternity.

So it is true for us: the paralysed,
 The guilty laden, the filled with shame,
 The heart polluted—full defiled—
 We, too, are objects of His pardon whole
 That flows a stream from Golgotha
 And set all captives free.
 This sheer and dear delight is for the world,
 For all humanity that see its truth
 In his contorted limbs, and painful cry,
 And silence when the gouts drip hard—
 Sweet blood on Calv'ry's stones—
 And in his holy purity
 Dissolves all stains.

'Rise up!' we cry as men of sight,
 As women of insight, as sinners plain
 Who will believe this grace,
 And by this grace be freed.
 We too—as did that man—
 Race to our homes and to the world
 To tell the joy and peace and love
 Of full forgiveness.

The Full Freedom of Forgiveness

HOW OFTEN he had pondered the thought of forgiveness. Forgive what? Forgive whom? Forgive how? For him it was a present problem—a close, intimate, personal problem. If, when he was young, he had thought life to be complicated, now it seemed—more than ever—that it was hopelessly complicated. He had always thought of life as a matter of relationships, and still thought of it that way. Then, however, he had not been a husband and a father, as also a grandfather. He had been first a son, a brother and a cousin. Later he had become an uncle. Also he had understood his relational obligations to society—both the intimate society of the church and the wider society of all mankind: he had known the needs of the underprivileged, the starv-ing and the dying. He had wondered how a person could cope with them all and still have time to live out his identity without being smothered by human need and greed. He had taken each relationship seriously, wondering how he could fulfil each appropriately. He had felt he must play most of them by ear and fly by the seat of his pants. Yet being a son, a brother, a husband, a father and grandfather—these counted most of all.

How much he had failed! It was in thinking on this failure that he knew his need of forgiveness, since relationships could even be called sacred. They had to do with the dignity of human persons. Even as he had failed to honour many, many had failed to honour him. He needed forgiveness: he needed to forgive. At times the whole matter seemed wearisome. He knew distress and discomfort would come to him when he failed to forgive, and also when others failed to forgive him.

How simple a matter forgiveness had once been. As he had travelled through life he had sought to forgive others when they offended him or were cruel. Then it had been 'instant forgiveness'. Now, it seemed, his forgiveness was spaced out. He thought too much about it, and it had lost its spontaneity. Sometimes things seemed too wrong or too hurtful to forgive and he would go on contemplating the situation. It was not the big events which disturbed and unsettled him but the small things, the little rubs, the thoughtless indignities others settled on him. Such irritated him, disturbing his peace, for they were so needless, so unthoughtful. He was not deceived by their smallness for he knew them to be attacks on his essential being—his undisclosed but authentic identity. No eroding of a person's dignity could be ignored.

What was most painful of all were the accusations. They came as sharp, barbed darts, piercing and bringing pain and sometimes poison. They were the more hurtful when there was an iota of truth in them—the iota wrapped around with much falsehood. They were the innuendos that he was not sincere, that he was thoughtless, that he was stupid. Sometimes he felt the demeaning contempt in the

barbed messengers. He also knew how they demeaned the senders—those who failed to understand the beauty of a human created in the image of God. For his part he knew he had given much time and thought to living truly, and despite his many failures most of it had been sincere. How did one forgive such things? He knew one just forgave—that was the holy obligation upon all who had been forgiven, that is, forgiven by God. When Jesus had cried on the Cross, ‘Father forgive them!’ he had also said, ‘For they know not what they do.’ He knew the latter cry to be the richest of all insights regarding sins. Sinners did not comprehend the magnitude of their sins, the dimensions of their violations of God’s holiness and dignity—let alone the holiness and dignity of the human beings against whom they had sinned. David had at least understood that his sins against others—Bathsheba and her husband Uriah—were primarily sins against the One who had created all human beings. He knew bitterness and reactionary anger were not valid when human beings did not understand the enormity of their actions as they sinned against one another.

It was not that they were not responsible for the entirety of their actions: they were, but as wide as were their sins, as wide must be the forgiveness that would meet them. He knew that only too well. As a child he had been a confused person, trying to pick out the extent of his guilt for the actions he had done. It seemed to weigh him down—this constant guilt-burden. It interfered with the serenity and joy that a child ought to have. Then he had heard the message of forgiveness and it had brought a radical change in him, a joyful transformation from confusion and heaviness to a sweet—almost unbearably

sweet—lightness of spirit and brilliance of environment. He had sung with others:

Heaven above is softer blue,
 Earth around is sweeter green;
 Something lives in ev’ry hue
 Christless eyes have never seen:
 Birds with gladder songs o’erflow,
 Flow’rs with deeper beauties shine,
 Since I know, as now I know,
 I am his and he is mine.

He remembered as a boy in his early teens hearing of the Cross and its outcome—the total forgiveness of sins, not only past, but present and future. That had cleared the sludge in his spirit, the troubles in his memory and had made way for a future that was purposive in vocation as well as in the ultimate goal he would reach—fellowship with God in eternity. Being forgiven immediately made him want to forgive others. More: it made him want to preach the good news of forgiveness and in his own immature way he had done that—to members of his family, even to his parents, and to others, his boyish peers, the girls he feared and admired so much, and the others who treated him henceforth as ‘religious’. He knew the difference between being ‘religious’ and being ‘a person of faith’.

On the whole life had done him good, even the war years and the conflicts in battle, the shock of seeing humanity in the times of brutalising and de-humanising, and then the postwar years when he had shared out of his new maturity the same message of grace, of love, and the operations of these two in the forgiveness of sins. He had never ceased to be amazed and delighted in the changes that took

place in human beings when the truth of forgiveness dawned upon them. He had noted with strong joy the change in them, in their relationships within their families, within the intimacy of marriage—and so on.

Why, then, had he come to a place where forgiveness had become in many cases a difficult matter? He had analysed the danger of self-righteousness and the sluggish reluctance of his spirit to rest upon forgiveness because it was endeavouring to justify itself. He would come to such an emotional and psycho-logical plateau and there become desultory and even bogged down in his own despair. Almost instinctively he would turn to the Cross and again teach it to others, and in the process would teach his own spirit, and light and freedom would again appear. Why, then, should he become so resentful when accusations came and his dignity was affronted, as his sincerity was called in question?

One day the truth had broken open to him, and it was this: all members of the human race, for most of their life and actions, were given over to proving themselves—each one—before God, others and their own selves. There was always that self-justifying endeavour which called on human energy to defeat its own guilt by self-justification. So many acts of self-atonement there were, and some of them quite fearful. Relationships were destroyed by the competition—the race to beat others and emerge as the true and proper one in the eyes of society. Prove yourself to others, was the thought and you will prove yourself to yourself. He thought of the great figures of history who had come to understand the dynamics of human guilt—Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin,

the Wesleys, Whitefield and the rest. They had put themselves through excruciating self-atonement and had been crushed to the dust, only to find the loving liberation of the Father in the Cross of His Son. How they had abounded in the grace that freed them to free others!

So had it been with him. He knew, then, the perverse dynamics of guilt and self-proving. He had known the need to acknowledge all his sins as sin, and his own self as weak in the face of sin that of itself was stronger than he. Then he discovered a strange fact within human relationships. Not only were all in the human race out to prove themselves right and righteous, but they were equally out to bring others under condemnation, to bring them into the bondage of guilt, and to manipulate them by accusation. He was astounded by his discovery. He had always thought of Satan as the arch-accuser, but he discovered that human beings used this same deadly assault upon the citadels of others. Whilst men and women sought to justify themselves before others, they also sought to bring down those others to the bondage of guilt, and even to shame.

One part of him began to comprehend that the attack was not even against another human being, but against the Creator in whose image that one was made. Just as murder is a deadly assault upon God when it attacks the one made in His image, so accusation against another human is an attempt to accuse God. Just as Satan would hold human creatures in his grip by the accusation of guilt, so one human being attempts to hold another in his or her grip by the device of accusation.

How does one escape this dreary bondage to others? How does one recover the freedom—the

blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord'? Surely, he thought, it lies in forgiving others, even at the very point of their attacks. Only in this way will one be invulnerable. Only by living in the Father's forgiveness will one be proof against being brought into guilt—bondage—that false bondage induced by others who seek to unburden themselves of their own guilt.

The thinker thought, 'One must live in the continuing freshness of the wholesome forgiveness of the Father. One must never move away from that point.' Then he remembered 'the old, old story of Jesus and his love'.

The marvellous message of the angel to the bewildered Joseph was, 'You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins'. How much the law with its multifarious sacrifices had sought to save covenant members of Israel from their sins. Graphic had been the bloody sacrifices, strong had been the altar providing the sacrificial holocaust which set the worshipper free from the misery of his guilt for sins committed and good actions omitted. Jesus had come to save his people from their sins by a power greater than all the sacrificial rituals added together. That was why John the Baptist had pointed to Jesus by the Jordan and cried, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'

On the night of his betrayal—at that Last Supper—he had taken bread and wine and had said they symbolised his death 'for the forgiveness of sins'—a statement which later prompted the Apostle John to say, 'He died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.' The writer of Hebrews put it this way—against all previous sacrifices—'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.' 'Father, forgive them,' Jesus had pleaded, and the Father—as it were—had answered in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, 'I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.'

'Remember . . . no more!' What love to cover the multitude of sins and to release the sinner into being his true self, his restored and renewed self! No wonder Jesus' words were on that first resurrection night that 'repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.' That was the message the apostles and the early church sought to bring to all people. 'You shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.' 'Let it be known to you, therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.' So John the Seer made his ascription of joy, 'To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood . . .'

Why had he thought it complicated? Why had he so much introspected the matter of forgiveness? One simply needed to see afresh the overflowing forgiveness of the loving Father and then one would reflexively forgive. Whilst it was true that others would work their wearying way through self-justification, self-atonement, and use the devices of accusation and guilt-induction into others, he could stand free of all that in the simplicity of the Father's total forgiveness. 'Forgive as you have been forgiven' was the message that came to his heart. 'If one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.' This, he told himself, is the way of continuing freedom.

This is the way of love and joy and peace. This is the way Jesus saves us from our sins.

Having said to himself, 'This is the way Jesus saves us from our sins,' he smiled, for then the fuller elements of the truth broke on him afresh. He had once known in a living way that Christ lived in him—'Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live . . . I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' Of course! The living, forgiving Son of God now lived in him, and so introspection as to the unforgiveness of himself and others, introspection as to his and their self-justification and self-atonement was scarcely needed. It was simply a matter of Christ forgiving, Christ helping him to understand the bankruptcy of the spirits of others who tried to keep him and others in guilt out of the fact of their own guilt. Now he was not alone. He was not fighting a lone battle against the otherwise overwhelming tide of guilt-accusation and guilt-manipulation. He was, as Christ himself had said, free!

His spirit lifted as he thought of Paul's wonderful statement, 'You died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' Of course! He smiled peacefully in the renewal of this revelation. 'How easy to forgive,' he thought, 'and how easy to be free.'

The Vegetable Plot

THEY always used 'the Barge'—the ageing Chrysler station wagon—when they went to her place to do the vegetable garden. They were turning into her drive and saw her standing there, waiting. Tony gave her a hug, and she responded. The other members of the team tumbled out and there was more hugging. They noticed she looked even more frail than the last time—September—when they had rejuvenated the garden.

She always led them into the house to hot scones, with apricot jam or Vegemite. The whipped cream was for the jam of course. There was tea as the team wished—white, brown, with or without sugar, weak or strong. She knew what they liked.

So they would sit in the kitchen and chat. They had been two and a half hours driving non-stop from Adelaide to their destination, an historic town on the Yorke Peninsula. They loved her old house built of stone and brick, and once they had seen the old fowl houses where Eric—now dead—had kept his prize poultry. He had been proud of his varieties of birds and the prizes they took. Apart from working his sheep and wheat stations, he had been a judge of poultry in most of the rural shows that mattered.

Tony remembered the time they had come to the old town, redolent with history—part of the Copper

Triangle—and they had asked him to preach in the Mines Methodist church—the one with the highest pulpit he had ever seen, and with a gallery on three sides. From the pulpit you even looked down at the high gallery. You almost spoke from heaven, and that is how the Cornish miners had understood their preacher. Yet even old Captain Hancock, boss of the mines, was more like God than God. Cynics said the miners went to church to please the Captain, and there may have been some truth in the matter.

Tony had come with his team when the town was in its demise. The derelict souvenirs of the past were everywhere, and the high heaps of slag were still there, waiting to be worked over again with modern machinery—so much of the ore having been missed by the former machinery, crude by comparison with modern equipment.

No matter: it was this woman Madge who had benefited by their coming. She had not wanted them to have a meeting in her house but her minister insisted, and she agreed as happily as any conscript can. All in the meeting were over fifty except Elaine the singer who came with Tony. She brought freshness and beauty to the evening. Some of the folk were in their eighties, especially one who looked like a restless canary, her eyes gleaming and her gaze flitting here and there. She had a nose like a petite beak, and she sang as well as any canary. Only Elaine sang better.

While he was eating the scone with apricot jam and whipped cream and sipping at his milkless and weak, sweet tea, he remembered that night. Some of the old folk had come to him with smiles of mystification. While they had been listening something had happened to them—something strange but not eerie. Something beautiful but inexplicable.

‘All my life,’ said one of them, ‘I have had a shadow, a cloud over me. Suddenly it has gone, and I feel free. I have never been free before.’

Another woman heard her speaking, and she nodded quickly. Her eyes flashed. ‘Same for me,’ she said briefly. ‘I feel free, but so free I hardly know how to cope with it.’

Tony had thought of these old church ladies as those who probably cooked cakes for the street stall and belonged to the Ladies’ Guild, and who seemed drab, and for whom life was a mixture of playing bowls, singing in the choir, and attending picnics on the sheep stations. For him they didn’t seem very stimulating. Now the person who scarcely knew how to deal with the exhilaration of freedom was smiling with a strange joy, as though she were a different person. Something like a new world was opening up to her.

The bird-lady—the beaky diminutive one in her eighties—had also been transformed. She wanted to know whether Tony had it all in a little book—that is, the things he had said. When he said he didn’t but it was on a cassette, she sniffed a bit.

‘We don’t go in much for cassettes and that sort of thing, here,’ she told him.

Next day she went to the electronics store and bought a cassette player and took Tony’s cassette and invited a bunch of women to hear it. In turn, some of them bought cassette players. The older women—and then the older men—wanted to come together and talk. They also took advantage of a supply of cassettes.

Madge had taken him aside and confessed how she hadn’t wanted the meeting in her home.

‘Every Saturday night I sit here and think of my

Eric,' she said. 'I just feel sad about the way he went—from cancer—and all too suddenly. Some-how I blame myself for lots of things about all that.'

She corrected herself. 'Not after tonight I won't. I don't blame myself any more. Whatever was wrong is finished and I am free from that past. I just feel so free.'

That had been about thirteen years ago, and Tony had asked if he and the team could come up and do a little gardening around her place. She was a bit stunned at the offer, but they had come because visiting widows was part of the deal of faith. Eric had landscaped his place perfectly, and the vegetable gardens had concrete paths between them, and they were bounded with the same kind of paths along the square perimeter.

She had asked one of her sons to bring in old sheep manure from under the shearing shed, and there it was—in hessian sacks. Andy had tumbled it out onto the good soil, and they had ploughed it in with the rotary hoe, and the girls had followed behind, raking and smoothing the gardens, and he, Tony, had sowed the seeds, and the young women on the team had planted the seedlings. After that they had weeded the rose gardens and Andy had mowed the lawns.

Twice a year they did that, once at the end of summer and once in the early Spring—each March and September. The lunches had become reasonable banquets, and they knew she loved preparing the meals. She also did typescripts for them on her IBM typewriter, and they made text books from her work. She would drive down to Adelaide in her four-cylinder car, and make her way through the maze of

the city, finally reaching them high in the beautiful hills. She would enjoy staying with them over the days and nights of special gatherings.

Even so, thirteen years had made a difference in her health, and in her memory. They had silently watched her drop many of her offices in women's group, show groups and the church. None of that abated her natural busyness. She was always occupied with something.

Tony had been reading reviews of books, and comments on writing by the specialists as the team had been driven by Andy up the Port Wakefield road, and beyond, on to the Peninsula. His eyes had glimpsed the miles of hothouses for the growing of tomatoes and beans, and sometimes—illicitly and secretly—marihuana. He had seen the undulating vegetable-growing farms, the packing sheds, the hobby farms with their industries of arts and crafts, and then the more traditional wheat and sheep stations, but all the time he was gripped by the journals he read.

He noticed that writing was the domain, almost exclusively, of the intellectuals. Few—if indeed any—writers were not graduates. Some of the critiques were brilliant, some dryly sophisticated, some plainly cynical. He was troubled. He knew how many of these graduates had written about Henry Lawson and the remarkable stream of the early writers, and he wondered at the fact that Lawson and his ilk were not university graduates, some hardly literate, but all with powerful ability to communicate. He even wondered whether or not a coterie that was almost incestuous was forming—professional critics talking to one another, and maybe even writers doing that.

He felt a little guilty thinking that they seemed to be writing for one another, even preening themselves in one another's suns, so to speak. His guilt made him banish the unworthy thoughts.

He also wondered about the literary people of his own day. A few were great novelists, yet only a few. Others were brilliant at writing, but they seemed to him to avoid the issues which were primary in his thinking—the ones he considered important such as the matters of human living, human giving and receiving, and human dying. All around was the noise that was rackety; the jargon of commerce and sport and entertainment. There were some prophetic voices raised above the racket, and they were mostly shouting about ecological matters, conservation principles, and the saving of the endangered planet along with its endangered species.

He didn't have much argument with the prophets, but he wondered what would happen if the earth was saved, and trees grew as the lungs of the planet, and rivers sparkled again and endangered species flourished. What then? What of the issues—what the old men had called 'the great eternities'?

He knew old ladies in a rural town with a mining history were insignificant. He knew that what mattered was the incessant soap opera of human living, preoccupation with genitals, their nature and their union—as though in all of this human love reached its ultimate. He thought of that confusion of pulchritude with prurience, the consumer minds of writers and readers alike, and the intellectualising of the arts, so that the exclusive hermeneutics of the critics had brought a jumble-jumble of thinking to a society which missed reality when it confronted them. He saw there was a blindness and a blandness

which did not even recognise confrontation when it faced them.

He thought of the time when he and his wife Constance had stayed for some weeks in one of the Cornish miner's cottages. A school teacher and his wife had bought it for a mere song, and they had spent some years restoring and furnishing it as it would have been in the 19th century. Furniture, bedroom wash basins and stands, kitchen utensils, pictures on the walls—including old family photo-graphs and oleographs—were all there. The floor-boards were highly polished, and there were scatter rugs. Curtains were chintzes in the kitchen and heavier velvet in the living room.

He and Connie had lived in the old atmosphere, and had read books from the past century, some of them of history but some also of the poetry of the Lake Poets, and the popular novels of the Brontë sisters, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. They had cooked on the old wood stove, and eaten off willow pattern crockery, and china vessels of lesser breed. Their minds could not help comparing that time with the times in which they lived. There were Cornish ghosts to help them, and all the time he had to stoop because he was tall and the ceilings were low—fitting for small but tough Cornish miners.

In that atmosphere he had been able to write, and not just about the past. His mind took him back to the forties and fifties when men and women without special intellectual qualifications had written simply and freely, and some of them who were his contemporaries then were now dead, and because they lacked brittle sophistication and knowledge of a society running free in its autonomy—and insisting

on no sanctions—he had felt the loss of his writing friends most keenly. They were not mentioned in anthologies, nor said to be part of an historic stream of national writing. He had some urge to visit their graves and apologise to them, and call them into comfort, but of course he could not do that, so he suffered with them in silence and read the inscriptions on Cornish graves, and wept a little in his heart for the numerous children who had been killed by epidemics. He imagined the sorrow of bereavements of parents all too helpless to save them.

Once when he drove by the cemetery at Wallaroo it seemed—in the haze of quivering heat—that the tall plinths of the headstones were actual sentinels guarding the memories of former inhabitants, and most of all insisting on their eternal but yet human dignity.

The sound of the spluttering, stuttering rotary tiller brought him back to life and the vegetable garden. He raked the rich soil to smoothness, dragged the heel of the rake to make a furrowed trench for sowing carrot and parsnip seed. He marked out places for brassicas and Elaine planted caulies and cabbages and broccoli. He imagined the broad beans bursting through the soil, and in another bed the potatoes. One day there would be a harvest of turnips and onions and Madge would make trays of Cornish pasties for some fete or show, or social gathering, and they would praise her for bringing the past into the present. Once she had made two hundred large pasties for one of their special days and driven with them down to the city and up into the hills, and folk had marvelled. It had been a sort of gourmet time.

After they had finished the banquet lunch they lolled back and shared the times they had known, and Madge talked of her life on the farm at Maitland, and of the farms her husband and sons had cultivated and managed. There was talk of prize sheep, and of special fat stock—superb Herefords. There was chatter about tatting and tapestry, embroidery and patchwork quilting and the like. Eric would often be brought into the conversation, and especially regarding the long trip by P&O vessels to and from England and the continent, and then the trip when they had travelled through the East before going on to 'the old Dart'.

It was all a kind of kaleidoscope of events and sensations, of memories and feelings, and he sat amidst the welter of it, and wondered why it was not all known, and not understood as important and as the essence of life because behind it all was ancient faith reproducing itself in succeeding generations. He could not help thinking of the loss to many of the children of this day, and to many of their children. Maybe there were fine compensations. Perhaps—as it seemed in every generation—something new and rich would emerge, but he thought of the flotsam and jetsam of countless people, the incessant and restless to-and-fro of those who had much in the material sense, but little in the essential one.

He just liked the smell of the soil. He knew what modern writers would call ordinary sheep manure. They had a graphic word for it. They seemed to delight in demeaning what is essential and functional of animal and human flesh, as though the hand of the Deity had slipped when He made bodies, and how He had hiccupped when He made minds.

No matter: he—Tony—had other understandings, and they took in people old and young, and history and the hope that makes a future, and the future that makes a hope. He had no illusions about humanity —nor did he have cynicism or optimism regarding it. Again the thought of the kaleidoscope came to him, and he found it quite pleasing.

They said goodbye to Madge at the opened doors of ‘the Barge’. They had folded the rotary hoe until it fitted in the rear cabin of the station wagon. They had packed away the bits and pieces of unused seeds and plants and they fiddled with the rake until it fitted in—askew—and they tucked in Tupperware boxes and containers jam-packed with Madge’s special cookies, cakes and pasties, and there were also sweet navel oranges from her Washington trees, and there were special pieces of embroidery carefully folded and stored away—gifts Madge had given to the women.

After the hugs and the near tears, and the sayings about love and gratitude they all packed into the seats of the car and Andy revved the engine and backed down the drive, and they slewed around until they were headed towards Adelaide, and they waved steadily until Madge and they were out of sight, and they sat back with a deep sense of satisfaction.

Madge for her part watched them until the last. When they were out of sight she went to the back of the house and looked at the neat gardens, and their seedling plants and the promise of the seeds bursting into green life, and then she looked around the well-landscaped garden and thought how glad Eric would have been had he been there and seen its tidiness

and its freshness—if, indeed, he were not really there.

Something was deep in her mind and her heart, something that had come to her that night when Elaine had sung and Tony had talked. It was just about the same thing that was sending the team on its way, and causing them to chatter endlessly whilst the miles sped by, until some of them slept tiredly, and the others just thought how rich a thing is life, and how death has deep significance and is not at all to be feared. That was why she had called Tony aside, just before he went to the car, and she had said, ‘If you hadn’t come thirteen years ago that night in this home, and hadn’t told me what you did, then I would not be here now. Long ago I would have gone off my head.’

She was glad she had told Tony about the relief and release of that night, and for Tony her words made sense in a world in which many things made no sense whatever. He kept pondering the statement as he read on in his journals about modern literature and the like. He kept having the feeling that writing—for some at least—had become an end in itself. He kept thinking, ‘It is *what* we write that really matters, and not just *that* we write.’

He thought, ‘We have just been seeing the good things—simple as they are,’ but he wasn’t sure too many would believe him.

Fire in Our Bones

Lord! Let there be fire in our bones,
 Fire that charges the dull spirit
 And the slothful mind
 With love's fresh energy;
 Let love be the fire that brings
 Vitality to the body, light to the eyes,
 And power surging on through every vein.

Time was when the fire glowed,
 Bursting into full flame, consuming
 The dreams and the detritus,
 Purifying the mind of its futility,
 Its empty, pointless self-preoccupation,
 Turning it out to the needy ones,
 The derelicts and the floating debris
 On the vast tides of humankind.
 Vacuity is the judgement wrought
 On the mindless mind, the crass vacuum
 Of the image deferred, the glory-of-God likeness
 Committed to the pointless vacuity.
 In such abysses some live
 And no tocsin of hope
 Rings in their dark nights:
 In their sightless eyes no glory glows
 To bring true hope. Voided of all
 The spirit refuses being what it is,
 What it truly was in the created moment,

And what it truly is in the re-creation
 Of the Spirit-action that is redeeming love.

Lord! I had fire in my bones in the first dawn
 When the Sun of righteousness
 Burst on my mind and spirit
 In joy and healing power
 Over the dark mountains of the night
 Of the travailing soul of me.
 My despair had been fixed
 In the aimless winds, the rudderless hands,
 The torpid inanity of my sin-besotted mind.
 Lord! You came. Light blazed in the brilliance
 Of compassion indestructible. You came
 With the fire of love in Your eyes
 And its gentle ways in Your hands.
 I was healed, and the moment of its freedom—
 New to the long-bound captive of a fruitless *eros*—
 Transformed the agony of deathlong despair:
 Fire leapt from Your spirit into mine
 Igniting the inner man, blazing forth
 With holy affection for a world in anguish.
 Thus blazed the fire; thus was the light
 Flooding the dark mains of once restless humanity.

Here, today, in the invading silence—
 In the face of human everlasting contempt
 And ruthless, unremitting lostness—
 I who knew fire, who blazed with love
 But now am nigh to cold frigidity
 Do plead afresh the fire and the blazing love
 That warmed the once frozen frostiness
 Of my unawakened heart. Fire, Lord!
 Fire to blaze His heart's compassion—
 The passion stronger than all life and death—

And bring to You that world
 That fled in our primal father's loins
 The all-creative love for lesser things,
 For the new, long haul and pointless pilgrimage
 Of burning, barren hope of ego's nothingness,
 Since all is nought outside Eternal's home.

Give flame anew, oh Lord!
 Give dying coals within
 The stirring of Your Holy Breath
 To fire surging that declares the *rest* of You—
 The holy Sabbath *rest* of peace—
 Until the guilt departs from pained humanity,
 Its dark dissolve, its light blaze forth,
 And all Man's liberty of glory be
 The vista new and holy liberty.

Though He Were Rich . . .

'YOU KNOW the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Paul told the Christians at Corinth. 'You know that though he were rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.' The Corinthians had a very precious knowledge—they had the knowledge of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Possibly there is no more wonderful and valuable knowledge than that.

The other night I was watching 'A Current Affair' on television. I think it was one of the most moving events I have seen in my lifetime. It was to do with mentally defective and retarded children in Romania. Under the former Communist regime the children had been institutionalised by the Government, and crowded together into buildings substantial enough but which had the appearances—some of them—of being prisons. Virtually that is what they were—and still are. In the films taken of the children they were mainly naked, many of them pitifully thin, not at all like children as we know them, children generally being beloved and at least having the appearance of being cared for.

It would take reams of paper to describe the sadness of the scenes. I imagine the sight of them, comparatively brief though it was, will haunt many of us

to the end of our days. We may classify it as 'man's inhumanity to man', and so leave it at that—as though that were some explanation! In fact it seemed to me it was not mere inhumanity: it was helpless carelessness in view of the facts. The government of the land wanted to put away children who were a problem in society—defective, retarded, idiots and many of them insane. Where could they be put in a collective society? The answer must have been 'Out of sight. Out of mind. Behind heavy stone walls!'

There is scarcely much point at this time referring to the lavish palaces of the President of Romania. He has been put up against a wall and shot for his vast perfidy on so many scores, but his death does not undo the evil of his time. The new government—whatever its qualities, and whatever its good intentions—cannot in a day or two undo the works that have been happening in these child asylums. Not only are they understaffed but for the most part are staffed by non-professionals. Here and there is a doctor, even a psychiatrist or two, but they cannot cope with the horrible institutionalised mess. The children have grown to be like animals, snatching each other's food at mealtime. Some eat whilst urinating and defecating on their little potties. Meanwhile their feet paddle in a flood of urine.

The old ideas of Bedlam have come to be with us again. Noise, clamour, idiocy are all there, but something far worse. Many of these children are not defective, many of them not retarded. Perhaps some minor ailment—their being cross-eyed, or imperfect in physiognomy, or something—has brought them into a hasty but faulty classification. Even in the brief showing of the films one could see the normality of some children showing through, even—here and

there in a smile, in a brief showing of intelligence. Everything rose up within one to cry out for their redemption.

The pediatrician who was investigating the state of the children was herself in a constant state of indignation. We could see immediately that certain children were not defective, that many children could have been healed of their minor complaints, that the conditions of the institutions had cruelly numbed the children emotionally, and that many were dying of malnutrition even though not diseased. In some ways it was the scenes all over again of starving children in Biafra, in the Sudan, in other parts of Africa. The same staring rounded eyes, the aching shrivelled bodies and distended bellies, and the attenuated limbs.

Looking at it all I wept inside. Having seen my own fellow-soldiers as thin and emaciated within a prison camp, yet this seemed—if it were possible—even a horror beyond that horror. Probably it was not, but because these were children who normally would have had the promise of a whole life, and because they were the victims of the system, of the times, of the uncaring society into which they had been unfortunately born—this was the tragedy of it all.

As I looked I saw the utter poverty of humanity—the poverty of spirit that put the children into these places, and the complete poverty of the little waifs themselves. Days afterwards when my memory remained haunted by these tragedies the thought came into my mind, 'Is all humanity this poverty-stricken, this defective, this weak and emaciated, this deeply into some moral and spiritual malnutrition?' The answer came back abruptly, 'Yes!'

It was as though I saw afresh what I had known in many years, but had gradually moved away from fully believing it, that is, 'Man is utterly poverty-stricken, utterly incapable of true human health, utterly devastated as a human creature. He is pitiful, weak, undernourished, and ready to die without any rich prospect beyond death.' Such an answer is not easy to take, one of the reasons for this being the otherwise rich history of mankind, its vast culture, its treasury of art and music, of thought, of writing, of drama and religions. Only a fool would deny that Man has not shown greatness. The great monuments of the past are there to testify to that—the ancient seven wonders of the world, the new seven wonders of our times and the desert-born seven pillars of wisdom. These are a testimony to the wealth of humanity.

It was true, too, that when I looked at those little mites, those tragedies of flesh and bone and staring eyes, the pain was not because they were virtually dehumanised but because the basic vestiges of their humanity showed through. It was as though they were appealing—even mutely—to humanity to come and save them, to bring them back into a true life, to give them their chance of becoming human again. The response of compassion that resulted from that documentary—the flooding in of money and mercy—showed that humanity does respond to a call from its own. This is surely another element of the treasury of human being and human achievement.

No, it is not that humanity is thoroughly depraved, thoroughly gone beyond the place that it can-not be redeemed. Leaving aside its many wonderful achievements we must recognise the image of the

divine in Man, the vestiges of a true being, the promise of the glories which belong to the human race. Yet even then—the poverty of Man is apparent. In the face of those child-asylums no accomplishment has any value in the ultimate, if it does not redeem these lost.

So I thought as I sorrowed over my own pain and compassion for the little ones. The money sent—why that would be good, and that would help—and the prayers—well they will not move the God of compassion, but inform us more that He has already moved, that the very compassion I have in my heart, and others have in theirs, is not born solely of us but of Him. It is the deeper sorrow that one feels for the poverty of humanity without God, without divine aid, without the grace of Christ. That is the even more terrible tragedy but it is hidden in the affluence of human personality, secure in its accomplished treasures, assured in its aristocratic humanism, filled out in limb and life so that life has no basic disturbing tragedy. The tragedies shown on 'A Current Affair' can be dealt with—the momentary shock, the resolution to help, the cheque book, the dimming of the tragedy, the assurance that the human race can, and will, deal with it.

Perhaps it can. Perhaps it can marshal all its forces medical, professional, social and humanitarian, and bring back life to the defective, food to the stomach, clothes to the body, a certain reassurance to the mind, and some rehabilitation of the spirit. Let us not deny that this is possible, and probable. But on the level of the deeper tragedy of Man, yes even deeper than the terrible state of the Romanian children, is the impoverished spirit of Man. Human-istically he can explore his environment, his powers,

his abilities, and he can surely make a brave show of his accomplishment, but he is still poverty-stricken. He may even maintain some outward appearance of moral being, but his spiritual resources are drained. Time and again I have seen this when a successful person succumbs to suicide, when a brave spirit becomes intimidated and withers away, when bitterness sours the fruits of personal accomplishment and when greatness dies down to cynicism and querulous complaint.

Nor is this an occasional event. Man, generally, inwardly whimpers at his mortality. Because it is a deserved mortality and because he has no fountain of immortality within himself, he feels cheated of life, when, in fact, he has cheated himself of it. The Man of grace has come with life and its fullness to give to all, but they do not see themselves as the unfortunate children—wasting away without life and care. Like most of those children they join the terrible fight to survive as though they have memories of the greatness for which Man was destined. But there is no way out of the human dilemma. As I looked at those wasted little lives I thought of the pitying words of Isaiah: ‘A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench.’

I thought then, ‘There is hope for these pathetic little ones. The God of hope can yet fill them with all joy in believing. He can cause the broken reed to become strong again, and the smoking flax has the promise of true fire to come.’ All this promise lies in the Man of grace.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

*For the grace of God has appeared, for the salvation of all men.
When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared . . .*

‘You know,’ said St Paul, ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

Of course they knew. They had heard the amazing story from his own lips. He had thought himself rich until he met the Man of grace on the road to Damascus, in a vision, and then that grace showed him his vast poverty whilst showing him the inexhaustible riches of his grace. Those riches were lavished upon Paul. ‘Chief of sinners was I,’ he cried, ‘but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.’

But we are not like Paul. We have not persecuted the church of Christ in the way that he did. We are not impoverished. We are well fed and clothed. We have plenty. ‘I am rich, and I have prospered, and I need nothing,’ the church had said at Laodicea, until the one who moved among the candlesticks showed them that they were naked and poor and miserable and blind, and needed a special eye-salve to open their eyes to see their condition.

‘Amazing grace,’ cried John Newton the avaricious slave-trader, the decadent womaniser, the man of lust.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,’ he wept, and shouted with joy, ‘and grace my fears relieved.’

How, then, did this all take place?

‘For our sakes,’ said Paul, ‘he became poor.’ That is, utterly impoverished. Poor because he became man? No, he counted that no poverty for God had

created man in His own image so that He—God—might become man. Poor because he left behind the evident glory which was his? No, that glory was still with him, but it was glory for poverty and not aggrandisement. Poor because he moved among men and women and children and saw their bondage and slavery to sin, to guilt, to human avarice and lust and—pitifully—to death? No: he came for this. He came to heal and to liberate and this was his opportunity. If anything it further increased his stature.

Then what was his poverty? His poverty was a Cross. Not simply the shame of a blasphemer's judgements and a criminal's execution, but the poverty of spirit that became his when he was made to be sin for the human race—the sin of the human race. The Lord laid on him the sin of us all: the sins of the Romanian lords who committed thousands of children to squalor and a living death; the millions that perished in the concentration camps, the torture chambers; the man-made droughts; the pain and shame of barrenness amid plenty; the dark, sin-soaked concrete jungles of the affluent cities; the nameless perversities of the sex-obsessed; and the avaricious idolatries of the powerbrokers of our race. He became all this and more. He became the mean and the miserable, the bland and the crass, the mindless and the apathetic, the dispirited and the faint-hearted. He became everything for all, and the morass of all evil was laid upon him by a loving pitying Father Who sought to bring a crazed world back to holy sanity.

This was his poverty, and to buy it back to prosperity, to give strength to the bruised reed and glowing life to the smoking flax, he became it all and

struggled for its re-creation in a battle of holy love. It is true that he drew upon the resources of the Father and of the Spirit—as any man may do if he wills—but he never drew upon the resources of his own deity in order to fulfil the love that was his human-ity. He went down into the pit of evil, the place of shame, the shadows of desolation, until he was forced to cry in his utter loneliness—in his pain of sin-bearing—'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' Only one could cry that way—he that went out for all into the limbo of the lost. He had gone down to the dehydrated spirit of fallen men and women, and drawn upon all the resources given to him as a man by Father and Holy Spirit until they were depleted in that vast demand of spirit, and he was forced to cry, 'I thirst!'

When he was so poverty-stricken that he had nothing left, it was given to him to know he had succeeded. Then he could rightly cry, 'It is finished!' When he had given everything, then he received everything. He became the overflowing vessel of grace to the human spirit.

'And of his fullness have we received,' John cried, 'and grace upon grace.'

'Ah!' said St Paul, 'that we through his poverty might become rich.' I know it is yet but a fantasy of the mind—each child in those jail-like institutions being loved; the flow of competent professionals and genuine lovers coming to rescue them; the places purged of their stink of urine and excreta, the sweet smell of loving-kindness pervading those rooms; the pity and compassion of those equipped to heal; the loving touch; the tender but firm care; the nursing back into life; the hope coming to the eyes, and the bodies being strengthened, and the afflictions being

cured; the grace of a renewed humanity flowing over to other humanity; the patient-mindedness persisting until the frightened or cynical mind is convinced that this is love, that this is genuine unmotivated affection; the coffers of the rich and poor being opened and the deluge of love pouring in from the many continents; the growth of the mites so that bodies are well fed, and minds are healed and spirits have hope. This is true grace—perhaps even human grace—and it has grounds for action and it heals as it flows.

What of the world's well ones, those who have never admitted to poverty of spirit, who would turn with disgust from the inference that this is how they are in their riches, their plenty, their arts and their culture, their brilliance and their begetting? These are the deceived. These are drier in spirit than the suffering ones, for suffering confronts us with the grim reality of evil in our world. Affluence may damn us while it occupies us with our possessions. Success may drug us with self-gratulation whilst we are more spiritually dehydrated than the little mad ones.

'The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation!' There can be no greater announcement in Man's history. There can be no more reassuring statement. Grace has an abundancy which defies human words. 'Where sin did abound,' said St Paul, 'grace did much more abound!' In the light of the bounty of grace, sin's dark, swollen river becomes a pathetic little muddy trickle and suddenly grace is a vast surging ocean, full of incredible joy, greatly life-giving—super-abundant. In the light of grace, death's dark gloom and grimness becomes but the flicker of a

puerile sneer whereas grace brings hearty holiness, flowing life, banishing death's fear and making it to be but an intruding sneak in the noble affairs of men.

It is grace in the ultimate which will ennoble all the efforts and affairs of mankind. Nothing of lasting worth can obtain which was not born in grace. Grace is not a thing, an element, a commodity, nor is it an abstraction. It is the person of Christ himself. He does not dispense or disseminate grace. There is no grace apart from his person. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' That is why grace is warm, personal, has eyes and hands and a caring bosom. It does not talk about 'No human merits my help', for whilst that may be so, it does not think that way, or act that way. Grace does not give handouts. It is not the pity that condescends, but the love that becomes one with the needy. It has visited every crime and sin and evil of every human person in all of time, and it has neglected none. This is the story of the Cross. This is the power behind the Resurrection. This is the glory of the Ascension—the glory he will bring to the sons of men to make them as glorious as himself, as full of grace and truth as is he. This is the goal of overflowing grace.

The Bland Man

WE HAIL him—derived at last from the fine and commendable efforts of fellow-man—the Bland Man. We salute him—the product of much amiable research, and much sympathetic and empathic effort. Man at last in his goodness and his achievement. We laud and magnify the superb production of endless time, thought and energy spent by brilliant, practical and scientific minds. Out of all this we have the Bland Man.

He is the fortunate man—or woman—the blessed person. Peace having at last been achieved on the earth he has not one simple worry, and certainly not one complex worry. Should anything untoward—is that even possible?—invade this new serene society achieved by the thoughtful minds of our immediate forbears, then there is that Counselling Clinic at his disposal. The Clinic has fallen on hard times since times have no longer been hard, but then in this new world one does not even worry about vocation suspended. All is so pacific, so serene.

Of course all is the end product aimed at the new beginning, the new secular kingdom of God that needs no god. Man—man and woman, that is, humanity—is god. That has always been the good presupposition, the firm assumption, and out of it has developed this serene and feckless humanity in which all delight—if delight should prove to be of any value. This worriless generation has emerged

from what was a worriful age, an older but less wise culture. Theirs had been an age of pointless worrying, foolish ambition and striving, in which fame had been a spur to drive persons on to harmful com-petition, thus breeding fear, stimulating the adrenalin of others, and so causing anger, resentment, strife and wars.

It all began way back when utopian ideas came to birth, when liberalism was in its crude beginnings, when persons and nations began to be liberated. Doubtless there were failures to understand fully the principles of the new humanity, miscalculations in revolutionary practice, with the result that even liberals turned against their own philosophy, opting either for nihilism, cynicism or despair of the human race. New anarchy bid fair to override old hierarchy, but gradually sense and wisdom began to rule, and whilst the newer and saner humanity deplored the excesses of their oppressors, and whilst they rationalised the failures as a sort of step forward, they were undismayed.

A new generation of puritans had arisen which set about in a business-like way to outlaw all human foolishness. Beginning with tidy-up campaigns for the littered countrysides, they soon had tidiness and neatness as one of the new beatitudes. They canonised cleanliness in all its aspects, freshening sluggish rivers, protecting fields and forests, purifying the atmosphere, bringing order and chaos to industry which—though barely tolerated by the new evangelists—soon learned to know on which side its bread was buttered, providing the butter was minimal in calories, and not maximal in joy.

Ah, that was the revolution—bloodless and yet not gutless—which opened up the fairway for the

coming Mr Bland Man. How green was every valley and pure every sky. How calm every motion of life. In those bad old days—when human beings were troubled by their passions, disturbed by their dreams, terrified by their nightmares, and clearly suspicious of all other humanity—came knights and knight-esses in impregnable armour to stamp their social morality on an otherwise naughty world.

How beautiful their light shone as they faced the fancies and foibles of a superstitious human race. They demythologised the demons and devils, the gods and the lords, and especially the dictators, demagogues, tycoons, entrepreneurs and lilies and poppies of elongated stalks. Nor was this a mean effort. They faced prejudice, misunderstanding, and intolerance—not only against themselves but against others. Tolerance alone would smooth out the imagined evil in the vast range of human perversions and deviations. These new liberals simply demythologised the law, the strictures, the moral constraints, and set up a new system in which any-thing was nothing, and nothing was something because it was not just anything.

How emancipating, how adventurous, how wholly liberating since now conscience was left helpless for something to do but approve the new non-strictures which had become the force and principle which banished anything which might bring guilt to human minds. In all honesty the new puritans—the new gossellers—did for a time use the weapon of guilt in order that guilt might be eliminated. They said—in effect—‘Guilty be he who would induce guilt,’ and for this they punished him until he cried halt and joined the conscienceless which had conscience only for non-conscience.

How rapidly this new gospel of freedom and peace spread across the world. Anyone who thought, marvelled that the world could have been hood-winked for so long a time in regard to the—so-called—reality of law, the assumed ontological nature of hierarchy, and the tyranny of discriminations sexual, racial, social and hierarchical. Down came the old structures, and up went the new, yet though they may have been there they were unseen. The natural wisdom of the human race recognised at last the natural wisdom of the human race, and so it expanded its industry of correction, direction and protection.

Let no one think that all this was easy. Simple enough it may have been in principle—even fools could recognise *that*—but it was painful to bring about painlessness. It cost much emotion to level out emotion until no longer it disturbed the human spirit. The motto—‘Blandness is all’—did not mean its founders were crass and careless, that is, mindless. Far from that: they minded very much that their fellow human creatures should obtain a conscious nirvana of life. The time must come when tranquillisers must be banished in making way for tranquillity—the vast achievement of the new, wise breed.

The way they brought all this about is now history—how they gradually took control, invading every avenue of life, business, industry, politics and the like. Not so in the doing of these things as in controlling them, in bringing revelation of the ontological nature of the perfection innate in the human race, and innate in the developing Nature—that which, after all, mattered most. It is a noble story

of their achievement of the new humanity, the new age, the new passionless race which, if it were not stoical was also not epicurean, and so not at all hedonistic. They had fought for peace, striven for serenity, slaved for freedom and battled for the best. This new age was not the existence on some other planet of the sci-fi imagination: rather it was the brilliant accomplishment of the indefatigable triumphalists.

Whilst it may be true that few paens of praise arose spontaneously from the new, emancipated race, and no hymnology had ever formed itself in adulation of the deliverers, yet delivered they were—and are! 'Blandness is all!' is a fine human motto containing within its few syllables a wealth of reality, a great prodigality of thinking and achievement, and the dearest way of life.

Before Clinics there had been chaos—emotional chaos. People were simply exposed to the tragedies of life and had to work their way through them. Anger, jealousy, and foolish rivalry had ruled the entire human race. Low in its depressions it was heady in its triumphs. The gamut of emotions had absorbed its time, been the measure of its conflicts, and the stimulation of its moods. How fatuous a time then. There had been hideous wars when men and women thought they had perceived greatness—not simply in the slaughter of fellow-humans, but in the sacrifices and passions and self-giving of many a noble spirit. Foolishly that world had believed in the greatness of grand opera, the majesty of much music, the poignancy of life, the wistfulness that attended beauty and the nobility that attended great things.

These things, of course, arose from the crassness of the human race. Greatness lies not in emotion, but

in the calm serenity of a mindless mind. Blandness must never be mistaken for crassness. The delusions and illusions of human dreams and human strivings have rightly enough given way to the tenable tranquillity of the New Ones. In their presence, cascades of merriment calm down to halcyon glassiness, composed certainty, unruffled mindlessness, nonchalant nothingness, undisturbed but purposeful composure. So we might run the gamut of sensible synonyms.

We who are wistful for this inevitable future—the indispensable success of our insistent reformers—do we realise where we are going? Once we had experiences of disappointment, deceit that undid our delusions, death that terrified us, wars that horrified us, and tragedies which sickened us—even unto death. Now these are passing—hallelujah! or hallelhumanity! Once families sorrowed when there were earthquakes, vomiting volcanoes, famines, droughts, floods, plagues, prisons, atrocities, wars and rumours of wars. Whilst this sorrow and suffering may still be part of the changing scene—as we travel to our bland nirvana—yet we have no need to fear. Clinics spring up around us like merciful mushrooms. Counsellors galore attend us. Where once we somehow endured shock and even survived it, now we are cushioned against its effects and are informed—with pity—that we will be for ever victims of it. Toughness is not the name of the game. Indeed it is frowned upon as unthinking, frivolous, and as foolish stoicism. Pain is exchanged for nice numbness. Children are saved from viewing death, sharing tragedy and seeing sicknesses. Children and older persons are assured they are victims and never the cause—even partly so—of

their suffering. Establishments, hierarchies and structures are, without question, the prime cause of unnecessary suffering. Such authorities—indeed any authority—ought not to exist. The poor are always right: the rich always wrong. Law enforcement agencies are necessarily evil. We are wonderfully warmed by regulated wisdom, by directionless direction. We—the suffering ones—are closely cared for. The sting of life is being exchanged for the painless, passionless states of induced sensory suspension.

Only the foolish would demand earthquakes, vomiting volcanoes, famines, plagues, prisons, atrocities, wars and rumours of wars, and only the crass would insist on the masochism of suffering, but perhaps—in the glorious advance towards our nerveless nirvana we may spare a thought—heretical though it may be—for what these things were once thought to do for the human race such as produce character not only in spite of, but in the experiences of pain, of hurt, of inner and outer wounding, and so of the suffering which seems by many to be the most feared thing in all of life, the most unnecessary evil that can confront the human race.

The Bland Man will never believe this. He is the fruit of the doctrine of human rights—right to peace, to security, to happiness, to absence of conflict, to the presence of even living—superb tranquillity. Those who have viewed with distaste and even horror the world we presently know, are the proleptic creators of the proleptic Bland Man.

How do you close off an essay such as this? I think it will be difficult. We know the Bland Man will never be created. We can devise the idea but not execute it.

We can move towards its establishment, but we will be defeated. The good gospellers of the Peaceful Man will find it difficult to develop their ideal. Their own feelings and passions will betray them. In pursuit of their goal they can be as irrational as any power-hungry creator.

It is not enough to admire the idealists and scorn their ideals. It is not enough to withdraw from the human scene in order to work in some anthropological laboratory, devising—*in vacuo*—more methods and means of establishing the goal. The heartfelt hobby will not produce the real McCoy. We must join the idealists—if not in their ideal then in their endeavour—but we must not delude ourselves into thinking of man as the victim of anything but his racial foibles, idiosyncrasies and evil. We must help to keep alive our consciences towards evil and hearts towards suffering, but we must proceed along the line of the revelation we have received from God about Himself and about the human race and His love and intentions for it.

In one sense there is no thing such as history. History is the talking and working of God, and only then is it intelligible. There are no such abstractions as 'good' and 'evil'. There is only personal good such as God, and personal evil such as Satan. The one does good, and the other evil. Man is called to stand upright and choose correctly, and then obey fully the power under which he has placed himself. The old game of telling us we are the victims of other things such as parental upbringing, heredity, environment and circumstances is not good enough. Such talk will divest us of our true humanity, of our personal integrity, and it will crush our true dreams and aspiration to fine lifeless blandness.

The only way I know is to say with boldness, 'Come wind, come weather, come disaster and authentic success, come loss and victory, come all things, I will not abandon my humanity anymore than I will deify it. I will trust in God before all others so that then I can live with all others—without suspicion, bitterness, anger and self-protection. I will never desire to meet or be Mr Bland Man even though he may call himself "Mr Peace Man" '. Should I meet him I will but pity him and never fight with him. My only doubt is that I will ever meet him and in that thought I end this essay with a sense of peace, a genuine experience of tranquillity and a mind that knows suffering need not be in vain, and even if 'weeping endures for a night' there will be 'joy in the morning'.

The Elders

Suddenly—so it would seem—
 Not hitherto envisaged or contemplated
 We are the old men, the aged.
 This shows in our eyes, shows in our bodies,
 Shows in the way we feel
 And the things we say and do.
 How simple! Age has crept upon us.
 This is what they say of us, and in their eyes
 Is the acceptance that the old are old
 And that ever—in parts of living—
 There will be young and old.

Myself, I am surprised.
 I scarcely thought it would happen.
 I thought the older were always older
 Than I will be, will be.
 Then, surprisingly,
 I find I am old though old I feel not.
 I am of another generation.
 I am of the past, yet presently living.
 Being young in spirit, young in mind
 But old. I smile, I grin—I even giggle—
 Looking at myself in the mirror
 Almost shocked to see myself
 As once I saw old Grandpa.
 Dear Grandpa—how alike we are
 Who never were. White locks,

Hair thinning, the thickening
 When once was a slimness of which
 I was all near-consciously proud.

Enough with *that* meditation!
 There are better things to think,
 Things pertaining to the new high calling,
 The quiet knowledge that
 There is wisdom, sure knowledge
 Of the way things are, the assurance
 That whilst old ways give place to new
 The old was not all wrong, the new all true,
 But time brings progress, regress,
 And swings the pendulum—the high is low
 And low then high—
 But all behind, behind it all
 The sovereign purposes of power
 That do not start with Man,
 And make Man more than what he is,
 Or what he will be.

We have touched upon clear reality,
 The process we call metaphysical.
 The thought escapes my words,
 Is larger still than human revelation,
 Belongs beyond us, yet in every day
 Comes constantly to us, always
 Possessing our minds.
 I watched an Anzac march and saw
 The old conditioned swinging, the tramp
 Of those who follow in simplicity
 The marshalled band, the skirling pipes,
 Swaying to rhythm, picking up
 The feet we'd thought were passive,
 Bringing us near to age's shuffling.

New light looked out
 Of the memoried eyes, the beat
 Revived old recollections, made the feet
 Swing into use of wisdom given them
 By dint of time, by place of suffering.

I think of these—of us, the aged—
 And smile in my simplicity,
 That all the time the motions be
 Of Him Who made us: He it was
 That gave us what was never ours
 Nor even born within us as a thing all set,
 This new surprising wisdom; suddenly
 We knew it—all there was to know—
 Not merely knowledge, merely facts
 That filled the jaded mind, but that
 Which all the sages knew and told
 Where men would listen, women nod
 In acclamation of the known truth
 Not fully insisted on by those who knew
 And understood their place in life
 To be the elders of the human race.

Each day I see them, meet them oft
 And smile contentedly. Not that we
 Are sages beyond all others,
 Women and men of knowledgeable mind,
 But those who deeply down
 Have hit the lode of peerless understanding,
 Mining the mineral wealth of truth
 Beyond a young 'not understanding';
 Know how to tell what youth sees not
 But pauses when it's uttered—
 Pleased though surprised,
 Even at peace to listen and to know

That wisdom lies ahead for them.
 I am content to watch full bodied men,
 Full wisdom'd women, no less the ones
 Fragile with age that's more than age,
 And even feeble, yet in utterance
 Telling the undeniable with a voice that's cracked
 And hands all feeble as they wave
 Seeking to give the fullest flow
 Of all that life has taught to them.

Suddenly—as I said—
 We find that we are aged:
 Death has no fears to those who know
 Its sting was long withdrawn
 By Love's great Calvary. We live
 In quiet assurance that His times are good
 And all the evil that would wreck our world
 Is on His wane; His sovereign power
 Has set the world to have new youth
 When Wisdom's had her day
 And still will have.

Who For the Joy . . .

. . . looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

THIS statement of Hebrews 12:2 tells us clearly that Christ had a powerful motivation and constraint for going to the Cross, and for going through its suffering. It was 'the joy that was set before him'. That joy was in some sense objective to him. He did not subjectively reason there could be a joy, and then make that induced factor the power to drive him on. He knew there was a joy which God had set before him, which was not only undeniable, but it was the very thing which enabled him to go through the agony of his death, and in the process to 'endure the cross' and to 'despise the shame'.

Keen critics of him, or even sympathetic admirers might say there was a strong hiatus in this drive to go through the crucible of the Cross. They would see him draw back in horror from that coming agony when he prayed in Gethsemane, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' Even the harshest critics can understand his reluctance to be crucified. They see him searching around for some other method of completing his mission. Those who love him

explain that it was horror of man's sin and evil—about to descend upon him—which made him recoil, and that may well have been the case—that he recoiled in horror at the time of 'the beginning of sorrows'.

Even so, Christ's seeking another way seems out of character with him. We must remember that he spent much time teaching his near followers—his disciples and others near him—regarding the necessity, and indeed, the indispensability of his death. Three times in the one Gospel (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33) he had predicted his death and his resurrection,

And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (8:31).

'The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise' (9:31).

'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will arise' (10:33–34).

We say that it seems incongruous with the character and intention of Jesus that he would wish to retract that *kind* of death, when he knew it was not only inevitable, but necessary for the purposes of true atonement of sins. It seems all the more out of character since he had gone through the rather wonderful event of the Transfiguration. Rightly understood the Transfiguration was a preparation

for the Cross. On the mountain the glorified Elijah and Moses spoke with the transfigured Jesus about 'his departure [*exodus*] which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem' (Luke 9:31). His death was to be an *Exodus*, but a new Exodus, and he was to *accomplish* it, that is, it was a work to be done. He was to be 'greater than Moses' and lead his people into a new liberty—a liberty greater than Moses had accomplished. The affirmation of him was spoken by the Father to the three drowsy apostles, 'This is my beloved Son [my Chosen; Luke 9:35], with whom I am well pleased; listen to him' (Matt. 17:5).

There can only be one of two explanations for Jesus' seeming reluctance to go on with the death of the Cross, as expressed in Gethsemane: either he was so repelled by the prospect of the evil which was to come upon him that his pure soul was revulsed and he felt he could not go on with it, at least not in that way, or he was not trying to evade the Cross at all. If he was not trying to evade the Cross then why did he pray what seemed an evasive prayer? The answer must be that he was dying in Gethsemane, and did not wish to die there. He wished to die upon the Cross.

Two factors seem to indicate the latter is the case. The first is that he claimed he was suffering even to the point of death. In Matthew 26:37–38 we read:

And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee [they, incidentally who had been with him at the Transfiguration], he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, *even to death*; remain here, and watch with me.'

His sorrow is certainly deep. If we take 'even to death' as rhetorical, then we surely do not understand

Christ. Mark says 'he was greatly distressed and troubled,' and reports his saying, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.' This makes it astonishing that the disciples should not remain with him. Perhaps that was the reason they would not, that is, because they could not. The moment was too fearful. Some old authorities add verses 43 and 44 to Luke's account:

and there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strength-ening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

These words are telling. They tell us he was under terrible pressure and that he needed the aid of a special angel—such aid as he had been given in the Temptation (Mark 1:13, 'and the angels ministered to him'). The terrible sweating indicates a fearful state of being. All of this accords with Hebrews 5:7:

In the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.

In the garden this is what he did, and he was saved from death in Gethsemane that he might endure it on the Cross. This accords with the one who said 'I have come to do thy will, O God' (Heb.10:7: cf. Ps. 40:8).

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

What, then, was 'the joy set before him'? We can set it out under the following headings:

(i) *The Joy of Accomplishment*

Jesus had said, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work' (John 4: 34). In John 12:27 he had said to himself, 'Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.' In John 17:4 he told the Father, 'I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do.' Later, on the Cross, he was to say, 'It is finished!' that is, 'It is completed!' for the work of the Cross had not been completed when he prayed the prayer of John 17. It was the last thing to be completed, and even though he was in agony on the Cross the joy of accomplishment was also with him. Anyone who has accomplished a work will know 'the joy that is set before him'.

It was *what* he was accomplishing which is significant, and which drew him on. He was saving men and women from their sins, so that they did not have to die in them. He was dying that they who live should no longer live unto themselves but unto God. He was dying to destroy the works of the devil, to destroy the works of the evil principalities and powers. He was dying to defeat the whole kingdom of darkness and to secure the Kingdom of God. He was dying to fulfil the judgement of the law so that men and women might not have to face its terrible curse, nor take out their guilt into eternity and know the endless retributive suffering that accompanies all guilt of sins. He was dying to rise again that he might be the first-born from the dead, and give them eternal life. He was desiring that his Father should see that he was doing the divine will.

(ii) The Joy That Was to Come to His People

At his birth the angel had said to the shepherds, 'Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people.' He undoubtedly brought great joy as he healed men and women, restoring them to a new life, and liberating many from the guilt of their sins. Everything he did was with a view to 'the joy of salvation'. On the last night he told his disciples, 'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.' In that same hour he said to his Father, 'But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.'

On the Cross as he was made both sin and curse he knew the joy that would come to liberated men and women, for their acquittal from law and death and guilt would bring joy and peace and love of unspeakable dimensions. It was their joy which was the joy set before him. From the terrible hour of the Cross—and because of it—the creation would become intelligible, and the world of humanity would make sense. Not, however, without that Cross!

(iii) The Joy of Returning to the Father and the Joy of Victorious Session

So many times Jesus had told them he was going to the Father, and they ignored what he said, stubbornly, as though they refused to hear his words. They did not wish this to happen, even though he explained it was best for them. In John chapters 13–17 he had told them clearly where he was going, and even why he was going, but the response was the

same. In 16:5 he told them, 'But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?"' In 14:2 he had told them he was going to the Father's house to prepare places for them, and in 16:7 he said his going would be of advantage to them for he would then send the Holy Spirit upon them. These two things did not move them. Finally he said, 'I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.' It was then recognition dawned and they said, 'Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.'

He gave great evidence of joy that he was going to the Father. His time on earth was completed, and he had completed the will of the Father for that time and that purpose, and with joy he would rejoin the Father. Having gone as the Son of God he would return as the Son of man. He would bring humanity home to the Godhead, and that humanity would remain forever. Whilst he had cried out in great horror, 'My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?', he had cried that out as the Man-for-men. He suffered the pains of Man's rejection by God, but at the end—having completed all things—he said, 'Father, into your hand I commit my spirit,' words written in Psalm 31:5. The apostles knew the confidence he had at the end, and they quoted Psalm 16:8–11 (cf. Acts 2:25–28; 13:34–37) in the following manner:

'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will dwell in hope.

For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,
nor let thy Holy One see corruption.
Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence.’

Peter’s translation of the last two lines differ somewhat from the 11th verse of the Psalm which is as follows,

Thou dost show me the path of life;
in thy presence there is fullness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Christ, then, in his hour of committal to the Father knew he was about to enter ‘the fullness of joy’! No wonder he was at peace. This was part of the joy *set* before him.

Whilst we cannot determine the components of that joy we can surmise that they were at least some of the following, namely, he was to be King of kings and Lord of lords, and so control, guide and lead the kings of the earth to their true destiny, for Revelation 21:22–27 tells us the kings of the earth will bring their glory into the Holy City. To control history, and lead it to its glorious climax was part of the joy set before him. He was to put down every enemy—Satan, the principalities and powers, the beast, the false prophet and Babylon—and ensure that the kingdom of this world would become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and having done that he would turn and give the Kingdom to the Father as the joyous fruits of his Sonship. In order that all these things would come to fruition he would send from the throne the gifts of repentance and forgiveness to both Israel and all the Gentiles (the nations) and likewise would send the Holy

Spirit to regenerate and empower his people, so that they would partake of his fullness and be his church, his proclaiming community. Finally he would judge the generations of humanity and fallen celestial powers and would condemn Death and Hades to the lake of fire, thus defeating the final enemy, Death. He would call his people joyously to the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, would cause the Holy City to descend to earth, and with the Father reign in that city of joy, offering the waters of the River of life, and the fruits of the Tree of life, having healed the nations by and from its leaves.

All of this was part of the joy set before him, and it was a great constraint to him to suffer and to die, and to take up his life again.

ENDURING THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME

We cannot enter his suffering, for it was redemptive and we cannot redeem. We may have fellowship with his suffering (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24) and suffer for his sake. We may count it all joy that we are permitted to suffer for his sake, and may count suffering as nothing, whilst recognising that it is the only way to glory (Rom. 8:17–18) whilst also the way of glory (II Cor. 4:16–18; cf. 3:18), but even from our suffering we can know that it can be a thing of joy, and not of bitterness or intolerable pain. So we believe his enduring of the Cross—painful as it was—was never without the deep and wonderful constraint of joy. The morbidity with which millions have viewed the Cross and remembered it on Good Friday would call us to rename that day ‘Black Friday’ since it was a day of hellish pain and grief.

Doubtless there was much that was of hellish pain and grief, but the light of joy, nevertheless, was through it all, even to the terrible cry of dereliction. Whilst being out in that limbo of the lost brought massive confusion to him, yet he could address God and address him without personal guilt. No: there was joy in it all, for he knew that in pressing on every painful inch of the way nothing of it was being lost—nothing! The grain of wheat was in utter darkness, but already it was pressing up towards fruitfulness! One day there would be the harvest, and then he would see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Dying would bring forth much fruit. This does not take away from the pain of his suffering, but it gives to it the glory of suffering with joy, and not with bitterness, not with a crushed spirit, and not with resentment and anger. It is joy which makes suffering pure glory.

No wonder, then, that the writer of Hebrews shows us the outcome of enduring the Cross and despising the shame to be Christ's session at the right hand of God. In the presence of the Father there is fullness of joy and in His right hand pleasures for evermore. It is by this that he is truly 'the pioneer [trailblazer] and perfecter of our faith'. We now follow the trail he has blazed, and will be home in that Day with the Father and the Son, and the myriads of angels that rejoice at our homecoming.

The Boy, the Bush and the Bells

HE TILTED back his Jason rocker, in the conservatory where the ferns and flowers were, and where there was enough sun and humidity to make him want to doze. So he dozed, there with the autumn warmth seeping through him, and every part of his body relaxed. All his nerve ends were at peace with him, and the glow of life made him think of the word 'serendipity'—not that he much liked the word, but he was at peace with the idea behind it.

It was then that the school bell rang, or—rather—clanged. School bells, though rare these days, have always been businesslike. They only have to sound to the perimeter of the playground but this one was venturing further. He did not mind. He rather liked its metallic clanging, for it brought a hundred other bells to mind. He found himself chewing the cud on some of these, sorting them out like multiple threads, and choosing the ones he wanted—disentangling them from the rest.

He remembered the second bell in the schoolyard of his primary school. He had seemed to rush through those days, so much kept happening in them. He had fully lived his days and stored them in his memory as though he would need this data in

later years. Also it was 'smugs after second bell', that is, you could grab anyone's marbles if they had been foolish enough to play the game beyond the allotted time. That was one of the ways he had filled his marble bag. Of course he had been an expert in the game, and had possessed a special connie agate which was deadly under thumb flicking aim.

The bell in the afternoon was as much a relief as a southerly buster after a hot westerly. He chuckled to himself at the memory because some afternoons it wasn't all relief and release, because he would have to fight someone or other. They did that right out-side the picket fence of the school, and teachers watched them, passing by. Outside was legitimate for all fights.

Even so, his memory hurried away from all that. Some bell was tolling in his mind, and it was a bell behind all the other bells. It was a church bell, and hearing it clearly he smiled ruefully. It was not the bell—or bells—he had heard on the day of his wedding, for that was a carillon. He had heard carillons in many places and at many times, and loved the strong grand sound of them, visualising the bell-pullers who made such music. No: it was the Sunday School bell, or—better still—the bell that rang out both for Sunday School and church services. What he liked and disliked about it was its imperious demand. He was a slave to Sunday School and services, and he had better hurry. Sometimes he heard it from home, but most times from the bush, and it clanged against his conscience.

The matter was simple. He loved the bush, loved it more passionately than the slender, blonde girl his adolescence adored. Mystified even by a girl as young as himself, he kept femininity off at arm's length, but

the bush was his mistress whom he loved passionately. Strange, that, for he could scarcely remember when and how it all began—his love affair with the bush. Almost unnoticed he drifted into it. His brothers had taken him on bush-hikes, and had boiled the billy, hunted freshwater crayfish, fried sausages in a pan, and baked potatoes in the hot coals. He had taken it all in unconsciously and developed a bush-sense.

One of his brothers was a collector of birds' eggs. Management insisted that one egg per nest was the permitted number. Whether there were two or ten in a nest made no difference. Gradually he had built up a fine collection, but not before he had learned how to shin up a tree, even a tree twenty feet up-wards from the ground bare of branches. He could shin up smooth eucalypts without a flicker of fear or fancy. He was an intrepid climber. He grinned at the memory, for you had to put the eggs in your mouth since you needed both hands and arms for shinning down to the ground.

So it had been his brothers who had bred love for the bush in him, but they did this all unconsciously since they barely tolerated him—so much younger he was than they. The difference between them and him was that they slept later in the mornings. He had developed the habit of getting up at the crack of dawn—slipping out and that without boots—and making his way to the bush before the sun broke out above the tall eucalypts. He would have to watch his steps because there were cowpats even in the bush from the wandering cows of the local dairy. He kept an eye for cowpats because he would later collect them in a barrow to earn threepences from his gar-den-minded mother.

Hitching the Jason Rocker a notch higher he grinned again. His wife passed through the conservatory silently, leaving him a mug of coffee and some of her Anzac biscuits. They were shaped a bit like his old cowpats and he nodded at that memory. Then he was back to the bell: the bell had started that line of memory. During the week he could bush-visit to his heart's content but on Sundays the bell came between his heart and his conscience. It even made him feel guilty for being in the bush, and he puzzled about that. He puzzled because the bush was nature, and nature was sensible, and churches and Sunday Schools were things so unnatural that he wondered that sane people had not long ago put an end to them.

He knew it had something to do with God, and that 'God' always brought him to an abrupt stop. He could not go beyond the word. God was the one who baffled him. He knew God must be true and correct, but why He propagated religion through churches and Sunday Schools puzzled and troubled him. He felt there must be a better way. Churches were as puzzling as the local cenotaph. The cenotaph stood on the edge of the local park. It was made of solid granite, an obelisk set on a wide platform, with steps on all sides—also made of granite—leading up to the main feature, and grates built into the base. It was the grates which troubled him for he believed dead men were buried there, men hauled back from Gallipoli and Mons and places like that. Someone told him that on moonlight nights their living mates—the old 'Diggers'—woke to see their dead companions arise out of the slush and mud of the battlefields and walk towards them with white faces and sightless eyes.

As the cenotaph troubled him so did churches. He wondered where God lived in them, and what He did all the week when the buildings were shut, building up dust and must for the day of services—Sunday. Sunday School halls were less religious, but they had the must and dust into the bargain. By contrast the bush was natural. He had enough sense to know God had created it, but his confusion lay in reconciling the God of the church and the God of the bush, and he had never solved the incongruity of God being God of both—of the bush and the bells.

The bells, of course, stood for God. They were imperious. They thudded into his conscience. They tolled him back from his enjoyment of the birds, and small bush animals, and the glorious bush fields of flannel flower, waratahs, acacias, Christmas Bells, Christmas bush, and clematis in the cool, leafy glens. They insisted he leave the world of redheads and fire-finches, and the piping rosellas to come into the unreal world of humans and choruses, Moses and Elijah, and Jesus in a long robe talking to bearded men who also wore effeminate robes. No wonder he had taken his revenge on Sunday School teachers and the superintendent, and no wonder one day he had been expelled. Even his pagan father couldn't understand that.

What made it all the more strange was that when he was five years of age he was sure God had called him to be a preacher. In this he had quite a lot in common with Samuel, who had actually heard God speak in an audible voice, but had to be tutored by old Eli the priest to say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' He, too, used to listen to hear God's voice but it never came to him audibly. It did come as a sort of inside communication, but he wasn't sure

how valid that sort of thing might be. Not normally a wearer of hats he had two hats in his mind which he took off in the presence of the Deity. He had a bush hat which he doffed with due reverence to the God of the bush, and he had a Sunday hat which he held in his hand as he had doubtful discourse with the respectable Deity of the church.

To add to his confusion he had been given another love—a passion for farming. He went to an agricultural high school and did rural courses, and learned about crops and pastures and animals, and found this a fascinating world. He handled great Shire and Clydesdale draught-horses, Ayrshire and Jersey cows, and pigs of every variety. He learned all about breeding, about ploughing and harrowing and cultivating and seeding. He also knew what goes on in soils whilst they move through the seasons both in fallow times and times of sowing and growing and harvests.

Obviously God was God of the country—as much as He was of the bush. How delightful He was, but then Sunday showed His religious side, and this puzzled the boy. When he went through a war as a soldier, and entered a theological seminary to reach his goal as a preacher, his puzzlement seemed suspended. He discovered there was—and is—no such thing as 'Nature'. He had grown up with poets such as Wordsworth and Keats, Byron and Shelley, those romantics and Nature-lovers, and he saw it had all been great imaginations. Dryads and fairies and chance maidens did not really belong to forest-lore and folklore. There was a thing called 'Creation' but not 'Nature'. He discovered the Dionysian world had been manufactured by pagans, but was not real. Romanticism could rot a man's brain in the end, let

alone deceive his soul. How he had smarted over these discoveries! There was really no 'Mother Nature'. Man was extrapolating from his desires for more than his own mother. Like the devotees of Baal and his sharp sexual consort, nature-lovers wanted to sport in the world of their own imaginations, rioting in the lush places of the green hills and woods, high up in the hills where they had created their own Arcadies.

His wife passed through the conservatory, smiling at him in his daydreaming, taking away the drained coffee mug and the empty plate. He pretended he had not seen her, not wishing to awake from his ruminations. They were little less than delicious. He had more to contemplate about the boy and the bush and the bells.

He remembered his theological tutor who had told him that God was God and creation creation and that God created but was no part of creation. He had told him of the curse that came upon the land when the primal couple sinned by their foolish separation from God unto themselves, and then their partial separation from each other. They had felt the cold sadness of separation from being in the Presence, to being only in the presence of the Presence, some sad Absence of the Presence having come to their hearts. When he had questioned his tutor he had been told that the one way in which God could communicate with Man was by covenant, and covenant was linked with the blessing of creation. Man could have back the blessings of creation even in the face of the curse on the land. He could enjoy creation.

All that made sense, but he was thinking of his joy in the bush, and his pleasure in farming, and then

the church on the hill with its insistent tolling bell. He knew he preached in such churches, and he had a great message to give to people, but he puzzled over the matter of the separation between creation and God, and the establishment of religion as though, somehow, Man must have religion, even if he disliked it. His foolish mind likened it to the castor oil his mother gave them each Saturday morning, and not even orange juice had made it palatable. He had long held a strange theory that all that was enjoyable was basically forbidden, and all that was after the order of castor oil was 'good for you'. In between, the human race lost out on a lot of joy! These ideas had caused a lot of shoulder-shrugging in him.

Now—one in spirit with his lazy Jason rocker—he smiled at his own past foolishness. Of course he had resolved the incongruity of boy and bush and bells. Had he not done so there would have been a split in his view of God and life, his theology of Man and creation, his philosophy of history, and his enjoyment of his present world.

After years of bushwalking, birdwatching, flora-looking, farm-gazing, story-writing, and personal preaching, the idea came to him which set him free from incongruity between the bush and the bells. It came this way as he reasoned from many years of reading the Scriptures, exchanging ideas theological and secular, talking with 'nature-lovers', people with a passion for things rural, and hard-headed men and women of business, trades and professions, that God must be correct in what He had done, was doing, and will be doing, that the matter of human rebellion, human autonomy, and human ambition must

have fouled up what would be an otherwise wonderful universe.

He was theologian enough to know that there are powers human and powers heavenly, lords terrestrial and lords celestial into whose hands God has given much of the business of the universe—of the worlds seen and unseen. This being so, the rebellion of heavenly and earthly creatures has brought distress and disunity to the creation. The magnificent action of God in bringing covenant to the nations of the earth—first through Abraham, then through Moses, and finally through Jesus—is the way out of the universal dilemma. That great action of God called 'grace' is what can move Man to repentance and faith. Obdurate, refusing to admit that his rebellion has caused dreadful havoc, a human being can be gripped by grace. It tells him God is not severe, grim, judgemental, and intolerably aggressive towards the human race, but that He is Father, that His Son loves humanity in the same way that He does, and that with the Spirit this great One brings into operation the wise and noble plan He had devised within His own will and counsel even before time began, namely to deliver humanity from the curse of guilt. The curse on the land, though significant, is nothing compared to the painful kickback of committed sin, that is, guilt-curse. The ground cried out against Cain and brought a curse on him when he defiled it by his brother's blood and the burying of the murdered corpse. So creation cries back on human beings as they defile themselves, their environment, and the holy Name of God.

One can wander in a bush and enjoy it, work on a farm and be refreshed in its operations, and one can enter a pulpit and hold forth with rhetoric and

oratory that moves humanity to tears, but in none of it is there liberation from the wretched guilt-curse. That is universal: atheists and saints alike know its terrible power. Something has to happen in Man's history which will go directly to the mark and heal the fracture of humanity and God, and that is the tree on which the Son of God hung as curse for the human guilt-curse, in order to eradicate it, and set humanity free. So free that they can enjoy the bush, and the country, and even the city, since they are at peace with God.

On his Jason rocker, in the quietness of a pleasant conservatory the old man who had once been a thoughtful boy, then a man and a soldier, then a farmer and a preacher, and above all a human creature like all other creatures; this man saw that churches on hills are necessary and whether their bells clang imperiously, or their carillon chimes ring out with rich melody, or whether they simply stand as silent sentinels of eternal faith, does not matter. They must be there—all imaginations of children and grown adults to the contrary—they must be there to witness to what God has done in history by coming into it in the form of flesh at the appropriate moment, declaring His grace in His Son, and bringing peace to the human spirit and all other things, by the reconciling death, and the energising resurrection.

He thought, 'The irritant of human rebellion is more than matched by what seems to be the irritant of the bell, the beckoner to liberty for proud humans who are intransigent in their rebellion. Its witness may disturb the spirit, but—heard—it will bring peace and serenity. It will energise the spirit to

exploits hitherto undreamed of, and it will make old men on Jason rockers know that God is no fool, and the wise man will hurriedly answer the call of the clanging and the tolling and the belling, be he in bush or countryside, or in the great cities and towns, or simply ensconced on a rocker—the symbol of a contented mind and the giver of pleasant leisure. He will also know that beyond the present operations of a world invaded by grace there is the grace of a new world in which old men are not old, and suffering and death never intervene between Man and God and eternal serenity and purposeful action.'

*Hell . . . is it better
not to think about it?*

ON THE night of my conversion I laughed, jumped, hopped, skipped and danced the few miles home from the life-changing service I had just attended. I burst in on my pagan family and announced, 'I have been converted! My sins are forgiven! Unless you do the same you are on your way to Hell!' My father and family didn't appreciate the enthusiasm of a thirteen-year-old boy and let me know it, but they knew what I was talking about. They understood my point. Hell was a well-known subject in those days—60 years ago.

That many people think about Hell is also a modern fact. *The Bulletin* in May 1988 ran an 8-page Cover story about it. The result of a Morgan Research Centre national poll sponsored by the journal showed that 79.4% Australians said they believe in God, 57% believe in Heaven, and 39% believe in Hell. Polls are a matter of opinion, and not even of votes. God is not up for election, and we cannot vote Heaven and Hell in or out, but thoughtful Christians do keep the doctrine of Hell in mind. A sermon on Hell in any church on Sunday morning would evoke quite an amount of interest, and in many cases a strong reaction and perhaps, too, even a surprising response.

The days of hell-fire preaching such as some of us heard in our youth from the Rev. W. P. ('Billy') Nicholson are all but extinct. It is said that men such as Dr Paul White and Archbishop Gough were converted by his preaching. It was also said that his converts stood well: few—if indeed any—ever departing from the faith. Of course quite memorable in the history of the preaching of Hell was Jonathan Edwards whose scholarship has been said to be the most powerful of all in the forming of the American mind.

So much for those good men, but has the preaching of Hell been opportune only at certain times of history? Is our reluctance even to discuss it today a sign of disbelief or is it an uneasiness of mind which suspects Hell is a reality but yet too dreadful—too uncouth—to even entertain in our minds? In fact, is it a dimension of basic theology of which we are ashamed and for which we have no love? Were it to be reintroduced into our pulpits and Christian conversation, would it have a dynamic impact on our Christianity? I heard a man say recently on a 'talk-back' radio session, 'Our prisons are crammed, and our churches are virtually empty. Is there some connection between these two things?' He seemed to be hinting that if the church were alive as formerly then the prisons might be less filled. If the preaching of Hell—which certainly helped to trigger off extraordinary revival in Edwards' day—were renewed, would we experience a similar awakening? What is the meaning of the often-used Scriptural statements, 'There is no fear of God before their eyes', and 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'?

To discuss the subject of Hell seems almost to open up a can of worms. Traditionally Christians have

always believed in Hell, but that belief has often been conditional. Two doctrines which seem to relieve the fierceness of it have been annihilationism and universalism. The first says that God annihilates the finally impenitent, and universalism asserts that ultimately God will restore all things, reconciling and unifying them in and through Christ. Such doctrines certainly take the sting out of the old hell-fire theology, even if they cannot dispose of Hell itself. The fact that a number of leading and highly respected evangelical theologians hold to one or other of these doctrines is a matter to be pondered. Have we read the doctrine of Hell correctly, or should we, too, revise our theology of ultimate retribution?

Let us, for a short time, enter into some of the objections Christians have to the doctrine of Hell as it was once traditionally preached. The primary objection is that God is love and ought not to send people to eternal suffering. It was suggested to me recently that any day now we might see a T-shirt protest, 'My Dad Sends People to Hell'. God must have failed if He can't save all people. Making them suffer eternally for their sins seems unbelievable. If Hell is a place where sinners are annihilated that is surely saying God has failed as a Creator—and even more as a Redeemer. Even to put impenitent sinners through Hell until they come to universal repentance, purification and reconciliation seems a torrid treatment when God is all love and so powerful! Surely all the Scriptures which speak of separation from God, wailing, gnashing of teeth and terrible outer darkness are at their best statements about a state of short duration, or at their worst metaphors to be put away with disgust. So argue those who cannot

accept the plain statements of the Scriptures regarding Hell.

So much for some problems regarding Hell. Even deeper are the ones of personal anguish. We have a deep love for relatives and friends—especially god-less parents, families and companions—and we dread the thought of being separated from them—we going to Heaven and they to Hell. For many of us the pain of this idea is intolerable. We even think that Heaven could be no Heaven for us if they were absent and suffering the torments of the damned.

'Surely,' we argue—we who see ourselves as orthodox Christians—'surely the Scriptures are speaking of One Who so loved the whole world that He will not suffer any person to perish!'

I am sure that these and other views regarding Heaven and Hell are not going to be answered if tackled directly. Take for example the wearer of the T-shirt 'My Dad Sends People to Hell'. Clever as is this quip it is not biblical. If God is the Father of the protester, yet he is not the Father of the people who go to Hell—assuming they do—since the apostle John says there are 'children of God' and 'children of the devil'. Jesus told certain Jews that they were of their father the devil, and that they desired to do *his* will. People in that frame of mind would find Heaven double-Hell if confined to its holy precincts. It is not so much God sending them to Hell as they refusing to believe the Son and his salvation so that 'he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him'.

So we could argue—answering one or other T-shirt objections—though I think such arguments are pretty futile. No: we must tackle the matter from

an entirely different point of view—the one that Isaiah was confronted with when he saw the holiness of God in the temple, and cried out in terror and anguish, ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’ For him it was a dreadful ‘lostness’ and one that could only be relieved by the live coal from off the altar, along with the statement, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven.’ Surely it is the holiness of God that confronts us with the necessity and sensibility of Hell.

Undoubtedly the holiness of God has to be known in order to understand the rightness of wrath. Without such understanding, there can be no proper discussion regarding Hell, or even—for that matter —Heaven. When the prophet said, ‘You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look upon sin,’ he was not saying God is squeamish in regard to looking at evil, but that He will see and *not* refrain from pouring out his wrath upon it. Fallen men and angels are in deep and vast dimensions when their rebellion ventures into the high holiness of God and seeks to violate it.

In Jonathan Edwards’ *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England*, he says in one place,

The things already mentioned have been attended also with the following things, *viz.* An extraordinary sense of the awful majesty, greatness, and holiness of God, so as sometimes to overwhelm soul and body; a sense of the piercing all-seeing eye of God, so as sometimes to take away the bodily strength; and an extraordinary view of the infinite terribleness of the wrath of God; together with a sense of the ineffable misery of sinners who are exposed to this wrath. Sometimes the

exceeding pollution of the person’s own heart, as a sink of all manner of abomination, and the dreadfulness of an eternal hell of God’s wrath, opened to view both together.

In his famous *A Faithful Narrative of the Sur-prising Work of God*, Edwards speaks of the acceptance of the doctrine of Hell by some who were as yet unconverted,

For there is a sort of complacency of soul, in the *attribute* of God’s justice, as displayed in his threatenings of eternal damnation to sinners. Sometimes at the discovery of it they can scarcely forbear crying out, IT IS JUST! IT IS JUST! Some express themselves, that they see the glory of God would *shine bright* in their own condemnation; and they are ready to think that if they are damned, they could take part with God against themselves, and would glorify his justice therein.

There are many similar passages in Edwards, and all show that far from casting listeners into gloom regarding God, or into raging at Him, the incredible beauty and glory of God is manifested: ‘very often some comfortable and sweet view of a merciful God, of a sufficient Redeemer, or of some of the great and joyful things of the gospel immediately follows, or in a little time’.

Many criticisms of Edwards’ sermon ‘Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God’ have been made, but few have brought forth the glories of God, and seen their congregations transformed in the way his were. Someone has said that the tide has turned and now we preach ‘God in the Hands of Angry Sinners’! Thus our protester with his T-shirt!

When it comes to our present approach to the doctrine of Hell I believe we should first be convinced of the fact of Hell and the nature of eternal punishment.

This latter term is used clearly in Matthew 25:41, 46. J. I. Packer in his Leon Morris Lecture *The Problem of Eternal Punishment* prefers to drop the words 'punishment' and 'torment' because of their present connotations, and to use the statement, 'the divinely executed retributive process that operates in the world to come'. Doubtless he has in mind the nature of punishment as viewed today, and also the bizarre ways in which Hell has been preached—sometimes in a bludgeoning fashion—by what he calls 'redneck fundamentalists, backwoods preachers, and old fashioned Roman Catholics'. Given the fact that many may have preached the doctrine of Hell improperly the *fact* of Hell still remains. Refusal to preach the reality of Hell is surely an overreaction, and one which is quite dangerous.

I have no doubt in my mind that Our Lord—more than anyone—warned against Hell. However much we may debate whether his terms are literal or figurative of terrible suffering, we cannot deny that he taught the subject, and that his mind was on judgement. At the same time he proclaimed a glorious gospel of liberation and presented high views of the Kingdom of heaven. The writings of the Apostles—the Epistles and the Revelation—have strong over-tones of judgement and Hell, and they warn, though they never use the doctrine as a primary weapon against their listeners. They preach a glorious gospel of love and grace—of forgiveness and justification. Even so, the doom of impenitent sinners is always there in their mind, and expressed in their proclamation.

I am sure we can—though we ought not—approach the doctrine of Hell with a dreadful sense of despair, of its awfulness, and of the difficulty of

warning people against Hell. Whilst warning them is part of our task of preaching to them and praying for them, the primary preaching must be of grace, love and mercy. Of course this will have no sub-stance to it unless grace saves us from destruction, love redeems us from judgement, and mercy plucks us as 'brands from the burning'. On this score any preaching that over-emphasises the doctrine of Hell and simply seeks to frighten people into repentance will not be the full and proper gospel. Nor will it be that gospel if it omits the fact and terribleness of Hell. Failure to warn—in biblical terms—leaves the blood of sinners on our hands.

How, then, shall we proceed? We must proceed with a true understanding of God's wrath, and the rightness and indispensability of it—wrath which is evoked by the flesh of humanity which 'is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be'. In Romans 1:18—3:19 Paul powerfully pursues the doctrine of God's wrath but note that it is all *with a view to* leading his readers to the wonderful reality that sinners 'are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus'. When we remember that God's wrath is not just a matter of a far distant Hell but something being revealed *every moment* upon sinners, and when we know that the mode of that wrath is the abandoning of us up to our sin and guilt and that, in fact whilst God's wrath is not sin, but sin is God's wrath, then we realise that the nature of Hell is the continuity of God's wrath on and in impenitent sinners for ever. The final judgement is what constitutes the finality of Hell. Simplistic statements about God sending human beings to Hell must be replaced by the wonder of penitent human beings redeemed to Heaven's glory,

and none being in Hell other than by his or her own choice. We can only be amazed that listeners will not take the way of grace, but plunge onwards to the Hell against which they have been warned.

I have been preaching the gospel for some sixty years and there never has been absent from my mind and heart the dreadful lostness of sinners *here, in this world*. I am often mocked as 'an old-fashioned evangelical'. Fair enough, but the shocking reality of Hell makes me pray for children, young people, adults and those in old age. Such consciousness of Hell and such prayer is never out of my mind. I trust God for Hell as much as I do for Heaven—not one word of criticism has ever been in my mind for that place of 'the divinely executed retributive process that operates in the world to come'. I may use other and even stronger terms, but I know that if I ever lose the sense of the reality of Hell then my life and teaching will be emasculated. The Cross is present for all who would escape Hell, but rejection of the grace that made him to be sin, and to bear our sins in his body on the Tree, is really double rejection of grace, and prideful insistence upon bearing our own guilt—the personal wrath of God upon us—for ever!

When I say I trust God for Hell this is no matter for personal pride. Scripture indicates that the 'the Judge of all the earth does right', and there will be no injustice at the last great judgement, or in the execution of it in the actions that follow. The lake of fire and brimstone has been made primarily 'for the devil and his angels'. Into it also go those whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb. In all of this God makes no error. 'Retributive justice' must mean that a person will suffer for—and from—his own sins, and not those of another. How

does the love of God figure in all this? 'God is love', and 'Our God is a consuming fire' are of the one piece. Eternal immolation in His love will be the most painful experience of Hell, and perhaps with-out that immolation, Hell would be a more dreadful Hell beyond itself since justice and love are inseparable.

Finally: there is no need to point the moral. Millenniums of injustice, the horrors of wars, enmity, hatred and homicides—to say nothing of the dreadful white evil of human and angelic self-righteous-ness—demand ultimate retribution. Terrible as Hell sounds it makes sense when we plumb the depths of God's holiness—His *holy* love. Recovery of this truth may yet transform our present weakened gospel, and bring us to tears of personal repentance, as well as tears for the lost to whom we must speak in words and actions of pity, love and warning.

Dear Rest

In the beginning all was created.
 All came fresh and new,
 Pristine and beautiful
 From the Divine hand—a gift,
 Gratuitous and without conditions
 That creation might glory in its freedom
 Reflecting the love that made it,
 And the peace from whence it came.
The morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy!
 All things gloried in their being,
 As He was the glory for their new becoming.

Not in the turbulence, the rolling deep,
 The *tohu* and the *bohu*—
 ‘Without form’ and ‘void’—
 Was there Divine restlessness,
 But only the calm of the Divine rest,
 The Breast that held within it
 Love and joy and peace and all things
 Pertaining to full tranquillity.
 Yet tranquillity was not static.
 Great movements of waters,
 Great lights and powers in the rolling heavens,
 Great forms on land and in the deep,
 And the glory of all vegetation—dark and light—
 And the splendour and the beauty

Of the microcosms, the macrocosms,
 The plain cosmos that was stable, and the glory
 That reflected the creative glory—
 All these were the actions of His works.

Then rested He. Rested from works,
 Rested to bring the dawn
 Of the eternal rest, the peace
 That wrapped all things around—
 Dynamic or quiescent, turgid or somnolent—
 Until nothing was without true being, true purpose,
 And the creation was filled to its fullness,
 Yet waiting for the future glory planned
 And the highest liberty promised yet to be
 Beyond this pristine liberty.

So through the ages the rest is present—
 The rest that is His, is Him, is ever.
 Only the wilful, the deliberately turbulent,
 The sinfully restless draw back.
 The sense of peace terrifies
 And the frenetic spirit flurries out
 Beyond the celestial-terrestrial calm
 That comes with the resident Godhead.
 The Triune One—through Whom all was made—
 Acts as a barrier to the frantic mind
 Bent on unceasing action. The quiet
 Disturbs the inner spirit from its self-born action
 Until it flees to wildernesses in its rage
 And yearning for the restless doing
 That feeds the prideful spirit and its gods
 Who mime the calmful dignity
 Of the Eternal One, in supine indignity.

It was the Eternal Wisdom which planned all things.
 Planned—if we can receive this—
 The prideful preaching of the creature-spirit
 To be as the Spirit of all things,
 As God Himself. This pride
 Brought the compulsive restlessness,
 The frenetic endeavour
 To be as Creator, creating, devising the new,
 Setting the splendid goal—usurping the glory—
 And making peace for all things
 Without the Divine and eternal peace
 Of the authentic Creator.

He who knows the true Creator
 Rests in the knowing that He is God,
 And we are His people, sheep of His pastures,
 Lambs in His arms, men and women calm
 Under His Godhead, under His Fatherhood.
 We partake of His rest—His sabbath rest—
 The rest in which the calm reality of creation
 And then redemption spells *shalom* and *eiene*
 To the tranquil'd spirit. Out of the Cross,
 Out of the blood flowing and the love pouring
 Comes peace to all. Lions, wolves and lambs
 All lie down together, and men
 Turn back their weapons into tools of farming
 And of calm domesticity. The world
 Inverts from its basic tragedies, its restive worry
 And its angry tensions. Deep within
 The healing has been made, the tensions solved
 And the bitter ambitions put to death.
 Love flows until all the world is captured
 And enters gladly into the Eternal rest,
 The glory and the dignity,
 The calmful joy, and the delighted tranquillity.

This was what He ever planned—
 His all creating and the eternal Cross
 Alone effect the glorious end—
 His peaceful cosmos, and His tranquil Man.

*The Life, Death and Resurrection of
Christopher Carstairs*

WHEN HE was only a tot, Christopher ('Creeping') Carstairs was bitten by the reading bug. He was four years of age when that happened. He was called 'Creeping Christopher' because he had the habit of walking everywhere as though half bent. He leaned forwards from the hips, and went mostly on tippy-toe. He also had a an earnest look on his face which was just about habitual. His parents and his two brothers and two sisters tried to straighten him up, but with little result. The local doctor—a GP—examined him and found nothing wrong, and the specialist to whom the GP sent him also said he was normal. In those days no one was sent to a psychiatrist unless raving mad, so Christopher continued to creep.

This strange habit ceased once he was bitten by the bug of reading. He now had no time to creep around. He had to use all his spare time in reading. His parents and brothers and sisters were relieved he no longer crept, but they soon became a bit apprehensive about his reading habit. They regarded it as a new idiosyncrasy—a substitute for creeping. When at the age of five Christopher was taken along to the

kindergarten of the local school his teacher thought he was either a prodigy, a genius or somehow caught in a temporary psychological aberration.

That was until she discovered—along with others—that he was interested in little other than reading. As was to be expected his writing was quite reasonable, though not at all neat. A sensitive person would have discovered the marks of a future writer, but most of his marks were blotches, for in those days they wrote with scratchy pens which were dipped in inkwells which were placed in the centre of the desks. It was remarkable for that age of ergonomic ignorance that desks were lower in the kindergarten than the primary and secondary schools.

Christopher showed some discrimination in his reading. It quite exasperated him to read, 'Jack sat on the mat. The cat sat on the mat.' He thought that inane, although as yet he had not read the word 'inane'. He quickly graduated to more demanding reading, and this went on until he reached the age of thirty-four. In between he did tolerably well at high school and university, and in a job with the *Adelaide Advertiser* as a researcher for trained writers. He would dig into archives—which were just coming into being—or would use the few libraries around the place. He was most helpful to competent writing men and women. Women were just beginning to need him at that time.

Between four and thirty-four he not only gained his Baccalaureate in Arts, but a wife, and—by degrees—three children. They all lived in the Adelaide Hills, which was a rare thing in those days for people to do, the roads being what they were, the buses few, and the mists in winter sometimes causing car and bus accidents. There were, of course, compensations

such as the beauty of the hills, the fresh air, the quietness—and so on. Christopher went to work in the train which took some time, but then he was able to catch up on his reading. He was always catching up on reading.

At the age of thirty-four he was taken by the talking bug. Up to this point his talking communication had been about 2 on a scale of 10, and his wife and children, although accepting the fact, had always thought it strange, as indeed it was. When he began talking—something triggered off by accidentally listening to what they called in those days ‘the wireless’—it was as though a whole ocean of volubility had been dammed up and was now being released. Initially there was a fine trickle, and then a flow, and finally a torrent. His family was at first relieved, then intrigued, and finally stunned by the eloquent flow. At the *Advertiser* they could not—or would not—at first believe it. It was as though all the encyclopedic knowledge the man had gained over his years just had to have its outlet.

The Editor thought highly of Carstairs’ researching ability and was glad to have him on the staff, but he was at the point where he would have let him go if the young man could not stem his tidal flow of loquacity and impartation of vast knowledge. He was now known as ‘Crazy’ Carstairs and only tolerated by the fellow-members of the staff because what he said made sense. Those who had an eye to using him would pick up bits and pieces of his rolling monologue and turn it into useful articles. Not that they ever acknowledged their source, since Carstairs had always been an unacknowledged resource.

The Editor would have reluctantly fired him except for the fact that the advertising editor suddenly saw possibilities in Carstairs’ loquacity. He asked the Editor if he could use the researcher as a salesman. In those days newspapers knew of no way of increasing circulation except by the kind of news they printed. Like doctors they were shy of advertising themselves, and since this conservative Adelaide paper shunned the devices of the sensationalist press, and never included on the front page—or others pages—pictures of buxom young ladies in bathers, readers never developed a taste for what the Americans call ‘cheesecake’.

‘Crazy’ Christopher adroitly turned his ability to talk to great advertising advantage. So much so, that when the editor of his department retired at the age of sixty-five, Christopher dropped naturally into his place and position. In the hills the family was relieved to know their father was really a person of substance, and so the children grew and did well in their studies, copying their father in doing tolerably well in education, matrimony, and the matter of raising children. They preserved the clannish nature of the family by building their homes in the hills. By this time the roads had improved, and all the Carstairs owned and drove motor vehicles.

At the age of sixty-four years, Christopher Carstairs was bitten by the writing bug. How he could have lasted until that time no one quite knew. Not that anyone had ever thought about it. The research material Carstairs turned in had always been good, well-written, and to the point. Of course he had had to use writing in his advertising work, and had

become adept on the typewriter, and—later—on the machines they called ‘word processors’. The first ones were rather huge, but they did not frighten Christopher who took most things in his stride, especially when they happened to be the obsession of the moment.

What triggered Christopher off was the invitation given to him by the Hills’ Writers’ Group. In fact there were more than one such group, but this group had been the pioneer one and had captured the market with that name. If you have ever stayed in the Adelaide Hills you will know that they are the home of culture. It is from this branch of South Australian artists, actors, writers, potters, sculptors and architects that Adelaide has become famous in the world of culture. Hence, of course, the famed Adelaide Festival of Arts—writing, music, drama, and the like.

The advertising man was asked to the group because some of them knew little of the inside workings of a city newspaper. They admired his loquacity, picked his brains, and—like others who used him—found him an evocative source for their own writing. So, rather than continuously asking him to speak, they invited him to be a member of their group, which was how he became bitten with the writing bug.

If ever a man wrote it was Christopher Carstairs. He was now into computers—a step beyond word-processors, though still in the same mode. For a time he was caught up in being a computer buff, but that rapidly settled into actually using them for his writing. So he wrote. His immense personal databank of encyclopedic knowledge, his flair for communicating it, and his love of reading all came into usefulness. He wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote.

His wife Margaret was a long-suffering woman: she saw Christopher through each phase of his obsessions with great cheerfulness. She had little to complain about, since her spouse was always occupied with his present hobby. He was a grand sup-porter of the home, talked and walked with his children on the Heysen Trail and had begun to be something of a grandfather. Cooped up in his study—busy with writing—he was no nuisance. She, for her part, was a true ‘Hills’ person, what with her gar-den, her pottery, her women’s clubs, the children and the grandchildren. Life was happy enough for her liking. It never entered her head to think she was long-suffering.

The curious thing about Christopher was that he never read out his writing to the Hills’ Writers’ Group. He was loyal to them. He went with them to the Writers’ Week biennially when the Adelaide Festival was on, and he lapped up what other writers, editors, and publishers said about prose and poetry and non-fiction. Having absorbed into his capacious mind what they thought, he used those materials as he had used libraries and their archives. He also read the esoteric *Adelaide Review* albeit with a bit of a sly grin, as though he didn’t quite believe it. Probably this was because he had been used to rather un-esoteric journalism.

The beautiful thing about the man who had retired from the advertising department of the *Advertiser* was that he had a good filing system. You would almost be forced to think he had posterity in mind, that he filed everything under its appropriate section—such as ‘Poetry’, ‘Fiction’, ‘Non-Fiction’ and

'Fantasy'—as though ready for some researcher to examine and analyse.

The rest of the story is well known. Christopher Carstairs' name is well known, too well known for me—a mediocre writer and critic—to make useful comment. You will remember his peaceful death: how he had a whole afternoon of writing, how he filed away his last comments on contemporary literature, and how—in bed—he read his last book. His wife was flipping through *Home Beautiful* when she heard what turned out to be his last words. He closed his book with a satisfied sigh, placed it on the bedside locker and said, 'Well that's that!'

She nodded—seeing he was not in talkative mode—and was about to turn out the light on her side of the queen-sized bed, when it struck her that Christopher was preternaturally silent. She looked more closely at him and discovered he had died. It was all so simple and all so natural, and ever so quiet. She had no feelings of alarm, although seventy-four years of age was young for a man to die. The national average age was about that.

You will remember that the children were called, and quite a lot was said in the Carstairs family, and the Hills' Writers' Group, and the *Advertiser* had a long and appreciative article. The number of people at his funeral in Centennial Park was rather extraordinary, given that Christopher had crept, researched, talked and written advertising script to a circle that was little more than Adelaide wide, in the days when that city was known as a rather large country town, and not as a teeming metropolis.

The family was not surprised that Christopher had a codicil to his will which asked that his files of

writing not be destroyed. None of the family had any intention of doing that. His wife Margaret kept his room in the state it had been before he finished reading that last night—just before he had slipped away.

It was ten years later when Margaret—then aged eighty—herself slipped away as quietly as her husband. No one dreamed she would do this but when she failed to respond to the daily morning phone call which Marianne—her eldest daughter—would give, then that daughter popped across in her car to find her mother as though in sleep, but dead. So Margaret's funeral was conducted and she was laid to rest alongside Christopher. That seemed to end the saga of a reasonably sane couple, and the family accepted it all as part of human life.

It was only when Clarrie Trimble—the leader of the Hills' Writers' Group—asked Christopher's eldest son Roger about his father's writing that the historic event happened. This occasion has, of course, become known to all writers, critics and literateurs. Christopher Carstairs is undoubtedly a household name throughout the land of Australia. It is also a name known in many other countries. One of the Adelaide universities set up a special Carstairs Literary Foundation, and the Literary Departments of all Australian universities have their biographers, analysts, and critics for ever working on this marvellous 'find'—as they call it—of the man who outclassed even Henry Lawson and Patrick White. The major prizes of the annual Christopher Carstairs Memorial Awards for Fiction and Non-fiction 'greats' is, without doubt, considered the highest in the land.

You would think that just about all the research that can be done has been done. Books have been written on Carstairs' early predilections to reading, his research period, his talking stage, his advertising phase, and his final era of writing. Many have been the theories, and rightly so. We all want to get to the bottom of the Carstairs' affair. What seems to puzzle most is the substantial nature of his writing. You would expect to find good material in a person who has done varied research, but then you would not necessarily expect to find depth of wisdom, since knowledge and wisdom are not the one.

It is good that most are baffled. Some have made comparisons regarding other great men and women writers, but Carstairs seems to be in another grouping altogether. A few have ventured to say that the man was without ambition. He was not—so to speak—in the market place. He did not have any immediate public in mind. He wrote just because he wanted to, and was not interested in writing for the critics, and certainly not for the academics. He never submitted his work to anyone. It would seem that the codicil of his will indicated that he thought his writing was worth preserving, but then those who knew Carstairs—or thought they knew him—argued that the man never seemed to have any evaluation of himself one way or another.

I must admit the whole thing had me baffled. The conclusion I came to was that the man simply loved writing, and thought there might be others who would like to read what he had written. I know this is a most simplistic rationalisation, and I don't expect anyone to agree with me. The one advantage I have over others is that I know his eldest son Roger, and Roger agrees with me. He, too, is by way of being an

unconsciously modest man, like his parent. For all I know he may have caught that way of living from his father.

Meanwhile we are grateful to Christopher for not only having given us great writing, but for having provided us with endless material for hypotheses, discussions, articles for writers' journals, the aetiology of his style and substance—and so on. Some plain souls simply enjoy his writings, and feel he has said a lot about life, society, their land, human nature and living and the major issues once known as 'the great eternities', that is, those dealing with our humanity, our identity, our future and destiny, and things like that. Certainly they are not the things you would have expected of Christopher Carstairs, but, of course—as they say—'You just never know!'

Thy Word is Pure Indeed

Thy word is pure indeed.
 In it there is no deceit, no element
 That's trustless, no weakness,
 No deficiency. Thy word is pure indeed
 Because Thy Person true is its integrity,
 Its source, its birth and fullness.
 Thy word is pure indeed!

So many words! So many speaking—
 Uttering the fruits of their cognition—
 Who to the world's great treasury
 Must add their own. The treasury grows,
 And thoughts innumerable are penned
 Till scrolls are numberless, and all are sure
 They speak full truth into our history.

So great our words—dimensions vast
 Of length and breadth and depth and height—
 And all anon in clever artistry,
 Or said within the widest mystery
 Of human thinking. These libraries vast
 Constitute man's lore and learning.
 Man, too, can think the thoughts of gods
 And gather legends of imagined deities.

Thy word is pure, is fully pure
 Else could we not evaluate
 The smallest thought we cogitate;
 Else could we not test out the human and Divine,
 And know the sense of what we know.
 We helpless would forever be
 In the vast deluge of our human flow
 Which we call 'mind'—
 The core and thrust of our humanity.

There is no word beyond Your word,
 No word mysterious or transcending truth
 For heady minds which strive to know
 Of truth beyond all telling.
 Thy word is truth—so simple truth—
 Since word is You and You are word,
 And that is all the telling.
 Your word breathes strong into our hearts
 That we may know in all its parts
 Your heart and mind indwelling.
 These minds and hearts may live their parts
 Within such holy dwelling.

O word of God, come down to Man,
 Who art our God articulate;
 We will the constant life of truth
 Forever in Your dwelling.

The Glorious Giving

MY VISITS to Jon the dentist are virtually ended since I said goodbye to my last remaining eleven teeth, and obtained my two full grinning dentures. One does like to say farewell to his or her dentist, professionally, and this, perforce, was the case. What I regret is that I shall no longer look at print-reproductions of Jon's uncle—Ainslee Roberts—whose paintings adorn the waiting room and surgery. Most intriguing of all is a bird painting—not by Roberts—of two black cockatoos, wild, stubby, red-tailed and yet aristocratic in a banksia tree. When Jon the dentist has you lie back in his dental chair, you look up at the ceiling into the eyes and mandibles of the red-tailed cockatoos. One of them has a large gumnut in his beak. Having been a worshipper of parrots for many years, I had read widely, and knew that certain of the parrots relish eucalypt flowers especially those of the West Australian flowering gums. I had not read that cockatoos relish the gumnut—the natural home of such mythical creatures as 'Bib' and 'Bub'.

In our home property we have a few of these beautiful trees, and one of them has rapidly grown tall and delights us, yearly, with its massive production of pink blooms—relished by bees and insects, but never visited by parrots, because it is so close to

the house. Over the years it has accumulated masses of gumnuts which it never seems to shed. The last year or so the tree has lost its symmetrical beauty. Limbs are so laden that they angle downwards towards the ground. I have never seen a tree with so many of the hard fruit, but something within me has stirred time and again at the burden of the branches. Yesterday I went with long-handled branch pruning-shears and clipped off the massive crop of nuts. I watched the branches relax upwards as they were lightened. It was as though their limbs were grateful to be released from their burden. I almost heard their expressions of relief.

I kept thinking, 'We have yearly visits of black cockatoos. They give their wheeling cry as they flap into the *pinus radiata* and nibble out the nuts from the cones, and they explore the tall stringy barks—maybe for blossoms—but they neglect our pink flowering gum. Yet there is the tree, waiting and wanting to be relieved of its nuts.' The strange thought struck me that planting a flowering gum, so near the house, had deprived it of its natural predator—the black cockatoos. With my pruning-shears I was snipping where those birds should have been eating.

At that moment there slipped into my mind the story a friend had told me recently, of having been out in the desert above Port Augusta and Whyalla. In this dry place, burning with the high heat, there was little but mulga and saltbush. Imagine his surprise when he found a crevice of soil—partly shaded by nature—in which was growing a tomato bush. It was small and meagre, but it had grown one tomato fruit, and there it was—red and gleaming. My friend took it in his hand, marvelling as to how a seed could have found its way into that desert.

'What I did,' he said, 'I have regretted ever since. I took the tomato and ate it—ate it in one sweet, juicy bite. But I'm sorry I did.'

'Why should you be sorry?' I asked him.

'I'm sorry,' he said, 'because I stopped the continuity of the tomato plant. It was reproducing itself. It would have gone on—year by year—reproducing itself remarkably in the harsh desert.'

I am no romanticist when it comes to what humans call 'Nature', but I said, 'Maybe the tomato plant didn't see it that way. Maybe it was grateful for the grand moment when someone came to eat its fruit so bravely born.'

He looked at me with amazed eyes. 'You reckon a tomato could be like that?' he asked.

I wasn't sure. Both thoughts seemed good to me. I began to wonder a lot about flora and fauna. I even wondered whether it is not built into all plants and creatures to give of themselves—if not to give even themselves. I wondered fancifully if the deer that the jaguar pursues and kills does not—in the last moment—surrender itself to death to the predator with some unconscious thought that it is fulfilling its destiny as a deer. Fanciful indeed, but I am told that animals in this state do not—at the very last moment—feel pain, as though some kind of an anaesthetic is provided for that moment. Human beings who have been near to death from a lion attack have spoken of a strange painlessness that comes.

Now I want to come back to the point of my essay which is to ask—and if possible to answer—the questions, 'Is it inbuilt into all things—by nature of creation—to give themselves utterly? Is this the kind of glory made innate by the Creator of whom it has been written, "He who spared not his only Son but

gave him up for us all, shall he not also—with him—freely give us all things"?''

My mind is omnivorous. It consumes and stores massive memories—pictures which I cannot obliterate. Some of these concern people in pain and suffering, in war and peace, in famines and plagues, times of poverty and wealth, situations of danger and destruction, and even halcyon days of prosperous life and balmy weather. In all of these I have seen amazing actions of self-giving. Indeed the history of the world is filled with strange and beautiful offerings—heroic self-giving in saving those ill with plagues, those starving in famines, those wounded in war, and tortured by insane cruelty. I could quote names now world-famous, but that would seem to narrow the special events down to them when the number is legion. Whilst some of these events are recognised, and even rewarded with honours, many more happen unseen, and medal-winning is not their motivation. An emaciated woman holds her hungry child to her withered breast, and dies trying to sustain it. Noble sacrifice is made by a soldier or a sailor in war, giving his life that his comrades may live. In freezing cold that is lethal, parents give clothes to warm their children, in poverty give their food, and in danger give their lives to protect their young. Often animals do the same—fearless for themselves in time of danger.

Of course the statistics are strong on the side of self-saving—refusal to save others and die oneself. The time-old cries are: 'Blow you Jack, I'm all right!', 'Every man for himself!', 'I'm in the boat: push off!'—I've seen plenty of that. Self-saving panic when a grandstand collapses brings horrible deaths; and so on. Even so, why is it that the world strongly

applauds self-sacrificial actions—some even in the face of panic—and never nominates them as foolishness? Why do the selfish acknowledge, with some sense of guilt, the nobility of those who give everything? Is it not universally recognised that creatures are their best selves when they are not trying to save themselves at the expense of others?

To persons of faith there is the recognition that all self-giving comes out of God. The hardened and cynical amongst us question pure motivation in those who sacrifice themselves. We suspect there is a desire for posthumous glory that drives the hero to his death in saving his section in battle, that the mother who renders the last drop of milk in her all-but-dried breast to her starving child is aware of the audience who silently regards her act. It may well be that some glory-hungry person rushes on death to seal his own honour, but who can tell? And who needs to be cynical? It is often because we have been embittered, not only with the selfishness of the world, but with our own inner failure, that our spirits shrivel into meanness and become poverty-stricken.

All this given in, the human race knows what is good and what is right. Jesus said to certain men, 'You, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children.' He meant that parents know what is good for those they bring into the world, even if they do not always go about good giving. Our evil can blind us to what is good, but even behind that evil we know what is right. It is the good that angers us, since we succeed so little in doing it. We are governed by our guilt into bitter criticism. We know

we are wrong even as we say the word of incrimination.

Where does it come from then—this glorious giving, this glory of giving, this giving of glory? From God, of course. From the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. From the personal heart of the living God, who taught the human race the nobility of self-giving, and in creating it implanted the heart with it. To give is to be God, and no less to give is to be truly human. Man is made in the image of God, and the gold of the image is its gleaming glory of self-surrender.

We may think, 'What could God give that would leave Him bereft, that would take away from what He has and leave Him bereft?' History answers, 'His beloved Son.' We might argue with history and tell it that what God gave He received back, that the loss was temporary, but then loss is not measured in units of time. Time is a measurement that cannot be used to compass pain. The only way to understand the matter and the glory of giving is to begin with God.

James—the noble elder of Jerusalem, and the brother of Jesus—said:

All good giving, every perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of the lights of heaven. With him there is no variation, no play of passing shadows. Of his set purpose, by declaring the truth, he gave us berth to be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.⁴

He was saying that the only genuine giving, and the only perfect gift, that is, a giving that is pure and a

⁴Translation of the New English Bible (Oxford, England, 1961). The quote is from James 1:17–18.

gift that is wholesome, is effected by God, and God alone. What He says is true, and His word brings human beings into a new birth, so that they represent to other men and women what it really is to be truly human: they exhibit the greatest gift God gives to Man—utter newness of being. Without being cynical, and yet being realistic, we have to say that all gifts and giving of human beings—that is, human beings working from themselves and not from God—are imperfect, not purely motivated, and often dangerous and enslaving to the receiver, if not to the giver. Hence the warning, 'Beware of Greeks coming to you, bearing gifts.' It scarcely needs to be said that 'bearing gifts' is not confined to Greeks! Whilst the giving of gifts is universal, so also is the wariness with which recipients view such gifts. Gift-giving—pure gift-giving—is an art. In fact, such giving is artless since it comes from God Who enslaves no one with His gifts or by His giving.

God, then, is the True Giver. Jesus once said, 'My Father is always working.' He was telling us that God was always giving of Himself in creating the world, sustaining it, and providing for all its needs, whether physical, emotional, psychical or spiritual. God never wearies in His servanthood, in His 'not looking on His own things, but the things of others'. Indeed, it is His nature to care for others. In that sense we might say He puts others before Himself, yet to put others before Himself is to be His true Self.

It is exactly in this image that He made us in the human beginning—the time of Man's creation. Man deviated from this when he sought to be independent, and to set up his own human system. The Apostle Paul puts it simply, 'Man did not honour

God: neither was he thankful.⁵ Thanklessness requires an exposition. It needs to be said that to be thankless is to refuse to attribute perfect giving and wholesome gifts to the True Giver. It is to assert that one is not so much a recipient as a creator of gifts: that one is self-sufficient.

Idolatry is linked with ingratitude. A person makes his or her idol and so is a creator. In fact one cannot create an idol: one can only devise it. The person sets out for his or her idol the requirements regarding this surrogate God, and says that it must provide such-and-such pleasures, necessities, fulfillments and the like. Idolatry is, in the beginning, a fascinating experience, full of promise and pleasure, but it ends in dismal—even horrific—disaster. The idolater becomes the slave of the idol. The devotee becomes twisted in personality and character. He has planned unconscious revenge upon himself for his rejection of the truth.

Servants of idols feed all into their idol—hoping for a return. They give to no other. They lose the glory of true humanity. As Wordsworth put it, 'Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.' The psalmist said of idol-makers, 'They who make them are like them: so are all who trust in them.'⁶ These words are not simply a criticism: they are a kindly warning also.

There is a giving which is purist without being pure. It is meticulous but calculating. It does not sound like God's word to Hosea, 'I will love them *freely*.' He had said, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols,

⁵ See Romans 1:21.

⁶ Psalm 115:8. The Jerusalem Bible has, 'Their makers will end up like them, and so will anyone who relies on them'.

let him alone.' He knew that until Ephraim was disillusioned regarding his idols, weary of their enslavement, and hungry for reality, he would not turn to God. When he would dare to do that, then it would be because God had proclaimed that He loved him freely.

So then, there is also a giving which is pure without being purist. It begins within the Godhead. The Persons of that Godhead give themselves one to the other. In particular, the Father gives out of His Fatherhood to the Son, who gives out of his Sonship to the Father. The Spirit gives by his serving the other Two, and they honour and give to him that which dignifies him—his high servanthip to Father and Son. Within that Godhead is the *perichoresis*—the interpenetration of one another out of the love which they are, and the circulatory movement which constantly distributes the gifts they have. Yet, were the Godhead not turned outwards, and were it not to create, redeem, sanctify and renew wherever evil has atrophied the good, then the Godhead would die! This statement seems so radical, so seemingly opposed to the will of the transcendent and impassive Godhead, that many would protest on theological and philosophical grounds. 'God must be left to make His own decisions of grace,' thoughtful persons might cry. 'To create is His grace, as is also to redeem and regenerate,' they would insist.

There is a weakness in this thinking. Creation is not the expression of God's grace, even though redeeming it is. God out of His great love created the universe, and was pleased with it. Its rebellion against Him was not unanticipated. It is true that prior to creating it He planned to show His grace by redemption, but whilst we may speak of the grace of

redemption we cannot rightly speak of the grace of creation. Creation is a gift—a pure gift, unprompted by anything other than the nature of God. If we see humanity as innately faulty and intrinsically morally weak, then we demean the glory of God as well as that of Man. Man must come by his will to worship God, not by some innately placed predeterminism. Love may well be obedience, but it is voluntary obedience, if not in fact, involuntary.

To give creation as a gift, to breathe into the primordial clay the breath of life and to make Man 'a living being' is pure gift, the true expression of Godhead. Father, Son and Spirit work in this event, as also in the continuing event of sustaining that life and creation. As for redemption, God loves His world and gives His Son to redeem its people, and to liberate it from the futility of the curse on sin. As the Father loves all, so does the Son. Both see the tragic poverty of autonomous man, and the Father sends the Son. As for the Son—'Though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich.' Nothing less than this will be the ultimate gift—the unspeakable gift.

So then the Son divests himself of all that will prevent him taking on true humanity. He counts others better than himself in that he places them before himself. He looks not on his own things primarily but on the things of others. In fact it is his true 'own thing' to first look on the things of others. In taking the essence of the Godhead to Man through his flesh, he intends to liberate Man from his selfishness so that 'they which live should no longer live unto themselves but unto him who died for them and rose again'.

He takes on no *ersatz* humanity but the true one.

The true one is without sin, but it is more true humanity for that! At the same time he takes on the frailty and weakness that have resulted from Man's separation from God and he bears them in his own humanity.

Not only in the streets of Jerusalem, in the towns, hamlets and villages of Judea, Galilee and Samaria is he impoverished with our poverty, but on the Cross he goes to the depths and dregs of all humanity for all time. He draws upon the resources that are available to any true human—the resources of the Divine Fatherhood and the Divine Spirit as he ascends to the Cross and descends into the hell of fallen humanity in its hour of dereliction and judgement. All evil laves over him as the dull waters of a dead sea, and as a sterile desert is the place of his affliction. In all their afflictions he is afflicted. He is wounded for their transgressions. He bears their griefs and sorrows. He moves out into the beginning of sorrows and then plunges into their depths and he is there when the end of sorrows comes. His poverty is total. He has no purple robe to clothe his nakedness, and his resources are drained to nothingness so that he cries, 'I thirst!' The loneliness of the limbo of the lost is such that from it he cries for the terrible separation that it is.

If he has given all in that universal event, no less has the Father given. He withheld not His only Son but abandoned him up for us all. Such abandonment was via the Spirit of life who must share in bringing the judgement of death to the Son. 'He offered himself through the eternal Spirit.' So the impoverishment of the Godhead was completed.

So too, the revelation of true giving. No 'shadow caused by turning' falls across the pure gift. The

enlightened apostolic band is amazed and is in wonder, not only by the resurrection from the dead of the victorious Lord, but by 'the unspeakable gift' that the Father gives, and the Holy Spirit communicates. Now they see the gift of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now they penetrate to the heart of the mystery—the mystery of true giving.

Jesus had told them to give in full measure, pressed down and running over, not insisting that they should receive again what they had given, but giving, not hoping for any return. This is the giving of the free Godhead. This is the Self-surrender of God for His fallen humanity and His creation in the bondage of corruption.

Now the human *perichoresis* begins. From the moment of the Spirit's coming there is high praise and thanksgiving, and there is the beginning of giving. As at Macedonia⁷ later, so at Pentecost. So rich was their love, and so warm their fellowship, that they sold what they possessed and shared it as need arose. The circulatory movement of material gifts was the expression of the giving on every score—material, emotional, intellectual, psychical and spiritual. It was a relational giving, a relational interchange of the differentiations which were—and are—needed to cover the whole community.

In other words as within the Godhead, so within the community: as going out from the Godhead so going out from the community of Christ to the community of all humankind. If God would not

⁷ See II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. The Macedonian Christians gave according to the measure of their ability, and then beyond even their ability, apparently trusting that God would supply their needs—whatever!

withhold His most precious thing of all—His Son—then His new children—those sons of God by adoption—could not withhold the things given them—such things as love, joy and peace, gifts of ministry, and gifts to meet special needs in all departments of human living. Living is by receiving and using, but living is primarily by giving since this is God's primary action.

In saying 'All things are yours'⁸, Paul was telling his friends that God withheld from them nothing that was essential to full living. 'The world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours.' Most of all, God withheld—and withholds—not Himself but gives Himself. Thus in the deepest regions of a human being, and in the whole Society of Christ dwells God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Within the deepest regions of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—dwells the new person as God has received him or her, and the new Society of the Beloved who find their home in the Godhead.

All this explains the statement of Jesus in his High-priestly prayer⁹, 'Father, the glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.' The most God can have is His glory, and the most Man can have is the glory God has given him—the glory which is wonderfully unitive. The Son delighted in the fact that God had glorified him¹⁰, that is, had given him His glory, so that his was a given glory which was nevertheless his own glory. In glorifying God or a person one

⁸ See I Corinthians 3:21–23 (cf. Rom. 6:23; 8:32; II Cor. 9:15; Eph. 1:3; I Tim. 4:4; 5:17; James 1:17–18).

⁹ John 17:20–26. The verse here quoted is 22. In this 17th chapter Jesus speaks sixteen times of what the Father has *given* him.

¹⁰ John 8:54; 13:31–32; 17:5, 22, 24.

simply ascribes to that one what is already so. No glorification can take one beyond what one is, but is a revelation of what one is. When God ultimately glorifies Man He takes him beyond what he has ever been, but not beyond what God has always intended he should be.

The ultimate glory of God is that He gives of Himself so that Man can share in what He is. As in eternity such was planned¹¹, so in eternity it will be fulfilled at the time of the *telos*—the goal of history. Such glory as man has now will be a giving glory, for such is God's. The glory Christ has given his people is a glory which makes them one. God gives Himself to Man and so Man first gives himself to God, and then goes on to give himself to the human race. The tree laden with gunnuts awaits its appointed predator, and the tomato in the desert its appointed recipient. Giving is living, and living is both receiving and giving—in humility. This is not only the joy of life but its sustaining pleasure and surprise.

When I had written the above and thought the study was completed I felt much had not been said which needed to be said. One saying of Jesus kept niggling away in my mind, namely, 'If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him.'¹² What struck me previously

¹¹ Passages such as Romans 8:17–30, I Corinthians 2:6–10, Ephesians 1:3–14 and Philippians 3:21 show that the glorification of Man was something planned prior to creation.

¹² This text is in Matthew 7:11, and there is a parallel saying in Luke 11:13 where Jesus said, 'how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

was that all human beings know what is good to give, and so what is not good to give. They have an image of what is right and what is wrong. They know they could and should give gifts. If my reasoning is correct, then the principle of giving is known to all, and—in one sense—is innate to all. Only deliberate withholding prevents us giving. To go back to our eucalyptus bowed down with gumnuts, and our tomato plant in the desert, we see giving is a principle of life.

I thought—with a sense of shame—that there is giving everywhere we look. Jesus said, 'Except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it abides alone, but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.' The seed loses its identity as a seed but finds a new identity as a plant. The plant gives all that it has—that is, to its death—in order to give further life. I thought again of the mother in famine-time giving the last drops of her life to the needy baby, and my mind spread out to so many other examples. As a former farmer I have many times marvelled at the calf an old cow produces. It is fresh and full, vital with power, and grows into a fine beast even though its mother was almost past bearing. Scraggy beasts bear beautiful progeny, and trees almost devoid of foliage and life bring their last fruits to fullness. There is a Mother Teresa in Calcutta with the pitifully poor, and a Father Damien in the leper colony. Even mentioning this brings to memory the woman-missionary I met on the field who confided to me in shame, 'I am dreadfully scared I'll catch leprosy [Hansen's Disease], but yet I feel I must go on nursing those afflicted with it.'

As I thought of Mother Teresa and her ilk I also thought of mothers of children. How they lose their

youthful virgin figures, become aged, grow white-haired, wrinkled in skin, and seem to lose all the beauty they had. Yet how rich they grow in knowledge, in understanding. How they go on giving and giving, and they are never rid of their children, never independent at last to enjoy what life is left to them—either married or widowed. Likewise with men. Both go on being parents, caring for their children and then their children's children. They have to give sympathy and understanding in times of waywardness of their offspring, in times of sin and rebellion, and they must pray and watch for the younger ones. Until the day of their death they cannot relinquish the ministry of giving.

Of course they receive back. The grain of wheat that became lost into the plant, is ultimately lost as a plant. It is straw and nothing more, but it has multiplied itself. It has good grain to show for its work, and for its self-dying. The parable of a seed dying fails to show that the dead plant rises to a glory that never plant has known. All the time—beneath and behind the giving—the self-giving creature has been going from one stage of glory to another. At the moment of its physical decease—as we will later see—it rises to a glory it has never known, although it has hoped for it.

When we go back to the saying of Jesus—'If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him'—we discover that the principle of receiving is related to the principle of giving. Whilst God is prodigal with His gifts He is also desirous that we ask for them. 'He will give good gifts to those who ask Him.' We need not be afraid the gifts will not be good. But are we too

proud to ask? Does it involve some dependence we do not wish to have?

I have on my shelves books I have written which will not see the light of day for years at the present rate of publication. Are they not good books—good gifts for fellow human beings? I am sure they are. Should I then not ask God to raise up givers and helpers so that these books bring life and light to readers who will need them? Did not Christ tell his disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his vineyard? Not even he could do that in his state as a human being. He needed others to pray with him and for the harvest-field. So I bow my head and say gently, 'Father! You have given me the ability to write these books, to think the thoughts you deem necessary for me to think. You do not want the boughs to break with fruit too heavy to be borne. Send men and women and resources to let these words flow out into society which needs them.'

So it goes for all things. We must ask, and he will give. James said, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him.' James knew—as did Solomon—the value of such wisdom. He knew it is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity.' The aged ones who have this are a blessing to the community. The givings of youth are fresh and beautiful, but often riotous and untamed. The maturity wisdom brings to society is most valuable. Older ones are often wiser, knowing they cannot produce from them-selves the resources that are required. They have learned the humility of asking.

With the humility of asking there is also a humility of receiving. God is saying, 'Take,' just as the fruit tree whose branches are almost broken, so laden they are with fruit. It is not merely a mercy to take: it is the acknowledgment of what something else has done for us. We are niggardly and surly if we refuse the offer. Sometimes we rationalise the free gifts of others by thinking we do them a good turn by taking! If we are not grateful to the tree which has borne its fruit for us, neither are we thankful to God who bore fruit out of a dry and bloody tree—a pain-timbered Cross! Christ will see the fruit of the travail of his soul and he will be satisfied, but we grudging receivers will fail to see free grace, and we will live in the sad twilight of 'neither grace nor law'. This is the inversion of giving, the perversion of taking.

Paul and others treasured the saying of Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Often *getting is not receiving*. It is Man gathering from every corner for himself: sometimes snatching, sometimes earning, and sometimes stealing. Receiving gifts from the Father is a blessed thing, and then distributing them even more blessed—if that were possible. What we receive must needs be given. The Dead Sea encapsulates its receivings and they lie sterile and dead. A true sea is living, rich with fish and weeds and other creatures. The Lake of Galilee is open at both ends. It receives and then gives and so it never dies. It dies only to itself—to give—but lives by the giving.

We learn it all from the Godhead. We have spoken of the Divine *perichoresis*, the interpenetration of the Three Persons who have one centre of conscious being. They share their differentiations. None is too proud to receive, none too proud to give. The Father fathers the Son and the Son gives

filially to the Father, whilst the Spirit receives his being from the Father through the Son and gives to them both. He is glad to glorify Father and Son, and indeed this is his glory—glorifying. We have seen that this honouring, glorifying and serving One of the Others is not confined within that Godhead, but has turned outwards to create, to provide for the life of all things, to redeem rebellious man and set the creation free to give full expression to its adoration of God and its total enjoyment of all things.

In this latter action we saw sixteen times in John chapter seventeen that God gives His Son all he needs. We saw that the Father abandoned His Son up to the terrible action of the Cross, and the Son likewise gave himself to it. Yet, in another way, it was not terrible for it was a 'fragrant offering and sacrifice to God' reminiscent of Noah's post-Flood offering to God, yet far transcending it. It was as Abraham's offering of Isaac, but transcended by the Father in the giving of His 'beloved Isaac'.

When, then, the Divine *perichoresis* moved out into the creation—first founding it, then sustaining it, and finally redeeming it and renewing it—then redeemed humanity cannot forbear from sharing in that Divine giving, that circulatory movement which keeps bringing life to all things. The Divine *perichoresis* became flesh in the Son, and the Father and the Spirit aided him in giving their treasures to the human race. Because Man is created in the image of God, then he will never be truly himself until—and unless—he constantly gives. In giving we lose our false and sinful selves and find our true selves.

It is incumbent upon us, then, to receive from all men that which they would give to us. We must

never be too proud for that. We must give all we have and they must not refuse it. No one may dam up the outflow of his brother or sister. Jesus said torrents of living water would flow from us. Such will flow out to dry ground until it is soaked and the watertable in the depths is renewed and rises to bring forth a rich harvest in what was once a dead and sterile desert.

This, then, is the principle of glorious asking, receiving, giving and asking afresh. This is the Divine *perichoresis* become flesh and Spirit amongst the human race. It is this for which he died, and lived again. It is by this we also die and live again—not to ourselves and for ourselves, but for him who died for us and rose again. We thus think not on our own things, but the things of others. We count them better than ourselves as the Father did us, as He gave His Son, and His Son as he counted us better than himself. This is the true 'mystery of godliness'.

When we have learned this—even in the small measure and practice that we have in this world—we have been inducted into the mystery of the Godhead. Our *perichoresis* is in Their *perichoresis*. We are one with the Godhead, and the Godhead one with us. This is the Divine-human interdwelling which settles history for all time, drains from it the acids and diseases of selfishness, and establishes love as the one eternal principle—even Man and God become one. This, then, is the inheritance God has promised His people from of old. He has heaped up the treasures of this inheritance by the processes of history, and the kings of the nations shall bring their glories into the Holy City, and when they arrive they shall see these same treasures of wisdom and knowledge to be those from which they have drawn

for the processes of history. Christ is the glory, and in him were once hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, but now they are uncovered, exposed, given to the sight of all inheritors. The Kingdom has come in all its glory at the end-time. It now awaits further history, further action of love as the king-dom of priests brings to bear upon the new creation—the new heavens and the new earth—those resources which will prove even more than required for the task of glory ahead—the form and shape of which we now only dimly discern, but which excite every fibre of our beings.

The Pastoral Application of Glorious Giving

The application is surely obvious—as we give, so we lose the tensions of self-seeking and self-extending endeavours—the endeavours which arouse deadly competition and divisions. We enter into what is most natural of all for the community of Christ—the Divine *perichoresis* translated into human understanding and human action. Undoubtedly *peri-choresis* begins at the top of the love-hierarchy—with the Father. He has eternally generated the Son, and so the Spirit, and because the movement is circulatory it might be called ‘ever-giving’. Take the pastor who is always expecting an upward movement in the pastoral *perichoresis*, but who does not initiate it—in the Triune Godhead—so that his action is both the witness to and expression of the Divine *perichoresis*. This one who takes from below as his due, is no trailblazer of the ministry of glorious giving.

To many of us receiving is often humiliating. It is as much a command to ask and to receive as it is to give.

Asking–receiving is a witness to the goodness of God, and induces the humility which expresses itself in creature-dependence and in fervent thanksgiving—a principle powerfully tied in with all giving. Thus, with the pastors and the elders sharing this natural *perichoresis*, the movement is always outwards, always a giving and sharing of all the resources, a receiving of them, and thus the life of God flowing out to and through the congregation.

It scarcely needs to be said that this is no system, no methodology, no way of going behind God to ‘get it better’. It is more blessed to give than to receive, but even so the two are inseparable. Here is much food for thought for us all, and vast room for action. May we learn glorious giving, glorious asking, glorious receiving and so—even more glorious giving!

Poor Pilgrims

We were a sorry bunch—they said of us—
 As we set out that morning
 For the long haul to the Holy City.
 Not many mighty in our motley ranks,
 Not many noble, most of us nothing
 In the eyes of those who watched us go
 Straggling and without military formation—
 We were peace-lovers at heart—
 Yet the sorry looking bunch
 Was filled with delight at heart.

Our weapons—you will have heard—
 Were time-named, such as faith a shield,
 Hope a helmet of salvation,
 Breastplate God's righteousness bestowed,
 Footwear the sturdy gospel-peace,
 And 'round our loins a girdle
 To fasten altogether
 The whole equipment'.
 In our hands, of course,
 The living shining sword
 Sharp as razor; it could cut
 On one edge the spirit of a man to death
 And then to life. The other edge
 Was for the destruction
 The Spirit brings in judgement.

A sorry lot I said we were.
 In truth this was the case.
 A holy merriment possessed our ranks,

For there were armaments yet undisplayed:
 The night before we'd fully supped
 At the Father's table. He in love
 Had given wine of merriment,
 And bread that girds the heart with joy,
 And fruit that full sustains the will
 In Tempter's hour, so making weak
 What others call the fearsome lion
 Of roaring Enmity.

If sorry in the eyes of all
 We noble were, though that unseen,
 For mocked we were for dreaming fools
 Who thought a city holy, pure
 Could ever be. Full millions were
 Who'd never heard of 'holy place',
 'Pure metropolis', 'true home of all'
 Or, 'godly commerce', 'glory free'
 And 'living with the King of love'.
 They saw our passports stamped,
 Our passbooks' totals filled with cash
 Of 'inestimable treasures'
 And they laughed. Their customs men
 Roared with the humour of it all.
 The reason? Our photographs
 Glistened and shone
 With images not our own.
 They wondered how we did it,
 Passed us on as fools, and wept
 Their own huge merriment.

None seemed to fear us as we went
 But I saw longing in the eyes of some,
 And dread in others, bewildered some,

And many shaking heads in doubt.
 So very few assayed to join our ranks
 And breast the looks of those who sneered
 And marked them down 'like fools'
 As we went on our way;
 We glad to share our food,
 To let them scrutinise the maps.
 They hoped our goal was not a myth
 Born out of hope as fools find gold
 Which crumbles in their hands.

They sang our songs—songs sad and soft
 Of Calv'ry's tree, Golgotha's stones
 All bloodied with the crimson stuff
 He shed for pilgrims all. We sang to them
 Songs filled with joy of rising from the dead—
 Sins all remitted to the place of no return—
 And Lordship crowned by life all bloomed
 From Calv'ry's hill, and Christly tomb,
 And Christ the Man now Lord of all,
 And all the nations at his feet.
 With us they wept for joy and joy,
 As though they dined with him, and wine
 Of blood had brought new life,
 And bread of life had brought new strength.
 The sorrow died from out their eyes
 And they sang songs we had not heard,
 And we sang—one with them—
 As they sang lays of heaven born
 And angels played above our ranks
 Music so celestial.

Some killed us as we went our way
 For anger at our joy and love,
 And envy of our peace. Rage came

Into the eyes of hating men
 And demons passionate. We knew
 The pathology of sin ourselves
 And murmured not against them.
 We knew our dead were still alive,
 Soon breathed by Spirit to eternity
 To see the Face we loved
 Which is for them alone whose hearts are pure
 And sonly are in filial love
 For Him who is the God of all
 And Father to His children.

Full many wounds were made,
 Full many hearts from time to time
 With fear and grief, and even doubt—
 'Fightings within and fear without'—
 But on we toiled, up hill, down dale,
 And where the mountains hung
 As though suspended from the sky
 Yet with their feet in Hell.
 That pilgrimage we made saw oft
 A cloud of fire aloft, or down below
 The Presence that we always knew
 Could not forsake the full-loved throng.

The rest? I cannot tell
 Till pilgrimage complete
 We see Him as He is, sit at His feet,
 And firstly fully gaze, then fall
 In adoration so complete
 That words evade us telling it.
 Who can describe beyond his faith
 The grace that now awaits
 In City Holy, City Strong,
 God's commerce true through open gates

Flowing forever? So it seems.
I must confess I dreamed it all
Last night. Yet come this morn
And faith knows well it walks this way,
And in its bag and haversack
Has stores of love and hope and joy,
And life's no empty passing time
And whiling, pointless, crassful thought.
Life's all a pilgrimage,
And glad I am my dream is true
As with the sorry, merry bunch
I, too, am singing on my way
That through the gates one day I'll walk
To music all celestial as all flesh
Sings to the Eternal King.
Made kings themselves and priests—'tis said—
They'll worship and they'll ever tell
The praise of Him who died and lived
To make this City theirs.
As Holy Bride with Holy King
They'll ever lovers be.