SONS OF ADAM

Studies of Old Testament Characters in New Testament Light

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To
MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

II Timothy 1:5; 3:15

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Preface

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, apostle to the Moslem world, meditates on the significance of Sons of Adam as they arise from the pages of the Old Testament. We only know that which we are. Knowledge is here mellowed by fourscore years of Biblical wisdom.

By the campfires of Arabia the author heard the speech of Job and his friends "from the lips of grey-beards wise in the wisdom of years." Long since, as he himself puts it, he met an old Arab sitting by the sea and playing with sand as a child would have done. Zwemer watched him and asked, "What are you doing?" "Go away," said the elderly man, "I am thinking of eternity." "And what is eternity?" Looking at Zwemer earnestly, the sand slipping through his fingers meanwhile, the Arab replied, "Eternity—eternity—if a bird should carry away one grain of all this sand, one grain a year, when all the sand had disappeared eternity would just be beginning!"

The following pages are bathed in the twilight of the eternal. Moving through them in the company of Biblical characters we become aware of a new dimension of life, the only dimension that matters ultimately, the dimension of the abiding. In a day such as ours, plagued with what I should like to call *neolatry*, it does one good to re-assess eternal values under God's high heaven.

In the divine glow of long-tested assurance, our guide is but little disturbed by the modern passion for a pitiless analysis

verging on hair-splitting. He is astonished, and at times sadly amused as he meets with alarmed critics consumed by a kind of sun-spot obsession which causes them to grope in the dark while standing in a glory of light. Leaving the pedants to stagnate in the midst of their alphabet soup, the author wants us to recover intelligence, that is, the faculty to read without being constantly misled by presumption and anti-supernatural bias. He is familiar with the theories and views of Biblical scholarship and evidently ready to credit men of good will with useful work, well done here and there. What irks him is the abuse of hypotheses left hanging in mid-air to become ends in themselves, radicalism being the decisive test of merit while the Flock is not being fed.

The following pages, then, may be seen as so many illustrations of the author's assurance. With Dr. Henry Gehman he maintains that "in order to understand the religious history of Israel it is necessary to retain the view of the Pentateuch that Moses was a monotheist and that his God was Jehovah. . . . and he remains, whether in a direct or more or less indirect sense, the author of the Pentateuch." So also does Abraham remain an historical character. The trouble with our age, as Zwemer sees it, is that taking the means for the end, too many higher critics argue endlessly on fine points while the clear task at hand is being ignored. In the case of Abraham, for instance, only these two questions really matter: why was he specially called the friend of God, and how by walking in his footprints may we, too, become friends of God? A whole chapter is devoted to answering these two questions. Similarly, what benefits are to be derived from the consideration of a Deutero-Isaiah and of a Trito-Isaiah? As if the most radical critics themselves did not conclude with an acknowledgment of the deep unity of the book of Isaiah, as it was and is so evident to the ordinary reader from the start.

Not that pragmatism becomes the test of divine truth! The

point made, or implied, again and again, is that the detailed consideration of possible exceptions causes one to lose sight of the rule. As our reading of the hallowed pages of God's Word proceeds it becomes apparent that it is sheer spiritual monstrosity to spend one's time and efforts on making fine points while the whole divine library is here opened for us to proceed upon. Scripture is to be probed with a view to immediate directions. What man of good will could miss them? There is ample light unto the path of him who would do the will of God and abide forever.

The approach is truly a practical one. The Bible in general, and both Testaments in particular, are ours for one essential reason, namely, that we should proceed upon them and thus know of the doctrine. As soon as we approach Scripture in such a frame of heart and mind it becomes obvious that Biblical truth is at opposite poles from the intellectualism of mere Greek speculation. Our Aristotelian (that is, man-made) laws of identity and non-contradiction are no longer seen to fit into the logic of God's agency. The categories of the Bible are divine categories. Henceforth true psychology is rooted in the Word of God. Fear, for example, is the first-fruit of sin, its apex is the "pestilence that walketh in darkness," its essence is demoniacal. Read in the ninth chapter the story of George Hunter, the apostle of Turkestan, tortured in his old age by the Soviet authorities. "Do what you can," George Hunter wrote, "do what you can to make the Church at home understand that this has nothing to do with the severities of normal imprisonment, but is based on profound understanding of demoniacal psychology. Long after you are released you still hear their voices taunting you, and, for longer still, you feel that they are after you, seeking to hurt and destroy you." Such are the depths of understanding made possible only to the man who takes his Bible seriously.

Salvation, then, is truly a restoration—a restoration of man unto God and unto himself. And just as the man of sin is under demoniacal power, the man of God becomes aware of the reality of angelic natures in God's creation. It is fitting, therefore, that a book dealing with Sons of Adam should consider the angelic world. The author is not afraid of altitude in the most beautiful sense of the word. He feels at home with Dante's *Paradiso* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* as he does with all the great classics of world literature. There is no more terrible token of our decadence than the modern taboo of transcendence which characterizes our age. Seen in this light, these pages constitute an antidote.

The book as a whole is a tonic. It is invigorating. Never speculating on the existence of God, it proceeds upon the reality of God. Throughout these chapters, as we walk in the company of Old Testament characters under the guidance of a man of Zwemer's stature, the Living God is felt to be very near. For a few hours we escape from the shallowness of our age to exult in the awareness of God's provision for those who love Him.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

On the Relevance of the Old Testament

Introduction

On the Relevance of the Old Testament

ONE COULD fill a volume with extracts from great poets and scholars in tribute to the beauty and truthfulness of the Old Testament. Hall Caine the novelist, for example, wrote, "I think that I know my Bible as few literary men know it. There is no book in the world like it, and the finest novels ever written fall far short in interest to any one of the stories it tells. Whatever strong situations I have in my books are not my creation, but are taken from the Bible. The *Deemster* is the story of the Prodigal Son. The *Bondman* is the story of Esau and Jacob. The *Scapegoat* is the story of Eli and his sons, but with Samuel as a little girl; and the *Manxman* is the story of David and Uriah."[1]

The author of *Moby Dick* was a lover of the Old Testament. "Call me Ishmael," so the great novel begins and in its pages we have Ahab, Nathan, Seth, Bildad, Ezekiel, Jonah, and Peleg. Even the whale is called Leviathan! Melville's mind was saturated with the Scriptures. He does not so much quote its actual words but exhibits its inmost spirit and essence, its grandeur and tragedy. One cannot read *Moby Dick* without being introduced to the saints and sinners of the Old Testament.

Those who claim that in the twentieth century the Bible has faded from modern poetry are grotesquely in error. One must read Kipling's *Collected Verse* with the Old Testament at one's

[1] *The Bible in Literature*, p. 215.

elbow to understand its allusions. Yeats, Masefield and T. S. Eliot are other examples; while E. L. Masters wove into the texture of his *Spoon River Anthology* such a plenitude of Bible references "as is found in few modern books, and he did it so deftly that it passes unnoticed." [2]

During the last ten years more than forty-eight Biblical novels have come from the press. Eighteen are based on Old Testament characters. The outstanding ones were Thomas Mann's monumental *Joseph* series, Vladmir Jabotinsky's *Prelude to Deliah,* Gladys Schmitt's *David the King,* and Franz Werfel's story of Jeremiah in *Hearken unto the Voice.* Mam and Werfel rise to the height of their theme. All other Biblical fiction, in general, discards the miraculous and is often untrue to the Bible facts in its sexual emotionalism.[3]

The dogma of Evolution, however, and the critical theory of Wellhausen, together did their utmost toward the close of the nineteenth century to shatter all belief in the historicity and authenticity of the "Five books of Moses" and the rest of the Old Testament. But there are those, also, who defended the Pentateuch against others who undermined its authority. Professor Frederic Godet, in 1869, delivered a memorable address on *The Sanctity of the Old Testament* in reply to attacks by some of his colleagues. He opened with these words: "I am here to plead before you, Not Guilty. What do I say, Not Guilty? Holy, Thrice Holy." [4] For what right have men to speak of a Holy Bible when following the Radical critics whose fantasy dissects and parcels out the books of the Bible far more extensively than the first disciples of Wellhausen did?

There is, moreover, utter lack of agreement among them.

[2] Lawrence E. Nelson, *The Roving Bible,* pp. 161 and 260.

[3] "Ten Years of Biblical Fiction," by Balmer H. Kelly in *Interpretation,* July, 1949.

[4] *Life of Godet,* p. 356.

They invented a whole alphabet of authors, redactors, and revisers—J,E,P,D,Q,R, etc. One reads with astonishment how the simple Scripture narrative was made both incredible and unintelligible in their hands. Their method was by pedantic analysis, illogical presumptions and anti-supernatural bias to refuse any quarter to the inspired writers for the slightest imperfection. "They slashed to the marrow, cut and recut the text, transposed, suppressed or substituted for the received wording." [5] It seems almost sacrilege to old-fashioned believers when such modern scholars still write on the *relevance* of the Old Testament or the *historicity* of its contents. Once the text has been cruelly murdered, to commit mayhem on it becomes only a post-mortem misdemeanor.

Nevertheless, when we read or study the Old Testament, the choice must be made. If we accept the position of the Liberal scholars, we can only come to the conclusion that the Pentateuch was written long after the days of David and that much, if not most, of its material is myth of a much later date than Moses. These theories, as well as the position of present conservative scholarship, are all excellently summarized by Professor Henry S. Gehman in his revised *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible.*[6] He concludes: "In order to understand the religious history of Israel it is necessary to retain the view of the Pentateuch that Moses was a monotheist and that his God was Jehovah . . . and he remains, whether in a direct or more or less indirect sense, the author of the Pentateuch."

Professor J. Coppens goes farther and states: "We have seen that the classical Wellhausen system is now shattered. What can it oppose to the archaeological data with which exploration in the Near East has enriched man's knowledge? . . . From the standpoint of the religious history of Israel the basic Well-

[5] J. Coppens, *The Old Testament and Its Critics,* 1942, p. 75.

[6] *Pentateuch,* pp. 465–470.

hausen positions are out of date."[7] Why do we believe these Old Testament stories to be true? First, because they are and always have been part of the Law and the Prophets which Jesus Christ accepted as the Word of God, final and unchangeable. His general endorsement puts the seal of His approval on the contents and alleged authorship. And in the four Gospels, Christ refers to the following Old Testament characters not as fabulous figures or myth but with the greatest solemnity, as historical: Adam and Eve (Mark 10:6); Abel (Matt. 23:35); Noah (Matt. 24:37); Lot and his wife (Luke 17); Moses (Matt., Mark, John); Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 22); the twelve tribes, (Matt. 19); David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Naaman, Zacharias, Abiathar, Daniel, Jonah: the last as type of His resurrection.

It is no longer necessary, therefore, to follow the crazy patchwork of documents since recent scholarship has made the old view not only "intellectually respectable" but spiritually far more profitable.

When we open Genesis or any part of the Old Testament in the atmosphere of Modern doubt and criticism, it loses its beauty and flavor. We are lost in a maze of conjecture and doubt.

There are always those who regard the Old Testament stories as the picturesque folklore of an ancient people, comparable to the primitive annals of other races. They object specifically to the miracles of the Old Testament and use the word "myth" for that which the Bible narrates as fact.

Berdyaev is a profound thinker and savant but he depreciates the Old Testament. Its God is not the God of the New Testament. The early chapters of Genesis are mythological and not historical (*The Meaning of History*, pp. 83–85). Reinhold Niebuhr bluntly states that "the story of the fall is not historical; it does not take place in any concrete human act." "The Christian religion may be characterized as one which has transmuted primitive religious and artistic myths and symbols without fully rationalizing them" (*Beyond Tragedy*, pp. 7–13). Karl Barth, in his otherwise great book, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, says:

> "Biblical religious history has the distinction of being in its essence, in its inmost character, neither religion nor history—not religion but reality, not history but truth," and that the truth of religion is "its other-worldliness, its refusal of the idea of sacredness, its non-historicity" (pp. 66, 69). If this is indeed the case, what matters it whether figures like Abraham and Moses are products of later myth-making![8]

The fundamental error of the mythological school is that by undermining faith in the historicity of the Old Testament they remove the foundations of the New.

"If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" asks the Psalmist (11:3).

From my earliest youth I was taught to read the whole Bible as God's own Revelation and as a Holy Book. My mother's Bible is still my Bible. And all its stories, read as a boy, still ring true *when I remember that Jesus Christ and His Apostles endorsed them.* Jehovah created Adam, called Abraham and wrestled with Jacob. The Egyptian princess took no ordinary babe from the ark of bulrushes but the seer of the Old Covenant. Long ago it was said that in the Old Testament the New Testament lay concealed and in the New Testament the Old Testament was revealed. We still believe this of all the types and shadows and Messianic promises. They point to the One who is Chief among ten thousand and the Altogether Lovely. We see the Promised Messiah in the wistful longings, the

[7] *The Old Testament and Its Critics*, pp. 115–116.

[8] Cf. "Miracle and Myth," by Philip E. Hughes B.D. in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, July, 1949.

prophetic dreams and the glorious visions of the early patriarchs.

The chapters that follow are only sketches, not portraits; not of all but of a few men. Our prayer for ourselves and for our readers is that of John Donne:

"And let Thy patriarchs' desire,
Those great grandfathers of Thy Church, which saw
More in the cloud than we in the fire,
Whom nature cleared more, than us grace and law,
And now in heaven still pray, that we
May use our new helps right—
Be satisfied and fructify in me;
Let not my mind be blinder by more light,
Nor faith by reason added, lose her sight."

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ADAM: Myth or Fact?

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Adam: Myth or Fact?

"READ THE FIRST chapter of Genesis," said Samuel T. Coleridge in his *Table Talk*, "and you will be convinced at once. After the narrative of the creation of the earth and brute animals, Moses seems to pause and says: 'And God said, Let us make man in *our* image after *our* likeness.' And in the next chapter he repeats the narrative: 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;' *a living soul.* Materialism will never explain these last words."

No nomad-shepherd could have invented the sublime creation story recorded on the first pages of the Bible. It differs absolutely from all the creation myths found in the ethnic religions and among primitive tribes. It leaves the impression of truth and conviction. Its very simplicity precludes the idea of invention. We have here not "cunningly devised fables" as in the pagan cosmogonies but an orderly account of the origin of the universe and of the creation of man, the lord of creation. It is one total conception, perfect and consistent in all its parts, unequaled by any other creation epic.

The story of Adam's creation as given in Genesis is confirmed and interpreted by Job (chap. 38), Isaiah (chap. 40), the Psalms (Ps. 8 and 139), as well as by the whole New Testament.

When the Psalmist considers the vast stellar universe, "the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained," he is impressed with the futility and insignificance of man. "What is man that

thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him?" And the reason why God is mindful of man and condescends to visit him follows immediately. "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Ps. 8:5–8).

The first thing we learn about Adam and the last in the Scriptures, is that he was made in God's image, that he was crowned with glory and honor, that he was a child of God by creation and, after his fall, became a child of God by redemption. *Every man's genealogy leads back as does that of Jesus in Luke's Gospel* (3:38), *"which was the son of Enos which was the son of Seth which was the son of Adam which was the son of God."*

We are all sons of Adam according to the Scriptures. The name Adam occurs no less than twenty-two times in the Old Testament and nine times in the New Testament. Most frequently, of course, in the first three chapters of Genesis but also in Deuteronomy 32:8, I Chronicles 1:1, and Job 31:33. Our Saviour refers to the creation of Adam and Eve and the sacredness of wedlock in Mark 10:6 and Matt. 19:12: "From the beginning of creation male and female made he them." This is a direct quotation from the Septuagint of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. And Paul's epistles (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15; I Tim. 2:13) would prove a lock without a key if the Genesis story of Adam were a mere myth.

There is also a reference to Adam as a historic person in Jude's epistle (verse 14). Calling Enoch "the seventh from Adam," incidentally, is a strong argument for the genealogy (Gen. 5:4–20). Adam is a Hebrew word meaning *ruddy* or red

or, according to another derivation, it is from an Accadian root, *Adamu*, to make, to create, and signifies a creature. Curiously it has been pointed out by Jewish rabbis that the three root letters A.D.M. form the anagram: Adam, David, Messiah.

The Jewish Talmud and Moslem Tradition add much to the simple story as told in Genesis but most of it is bizarre and some of it ridiculous. Near Jiddah, the port of Mecca on the Red Sea, one could see the grave of Eve (recently destroyed by King Ibn Saud) and at Arafāt Adam and Eve met after their fall from Paradise! Here, also, we have the story that God commanded the angels to worship Adam after he was created and they all obeyed except Satan, who was banished from heaven for his disobedience.[1]

The story of Adam has been embroidered also by many modern writers of fertile imagination: Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *New Adam and Eve*, and Mark Twain (amusing but at times irreverent) in *Eve's Diary* and *Extracts from Adam's Diary*. The Dutch poet Van Vondel in his *Lucifer* and Milton in his *Paradise Lost* have been great and worthy interpreters of the early chapters of Genesis. Both were steeped in the Scriptures and men of prayer. Milton outlined his great epic when he was thirty-four and dictated it to his daughters line by line. It was published when he was fifty-nine. The influence of *Paradise Lost* on English literature and on the common conception of Adam's creation and the Fall cannot be overestimated. He was an inspired interpreter and *Paradise Lost* is a commentary on Genesis. "Henceforth men could write of Eden as a place and Adam and Eve as people because Milton made men's mind familiar with them."[2] Whether we open Milton's *Paradise Lost* and read his stupendous interpretation of the creation and the fall of man, or, what some consider as an even greater poem,

[1] *Surahs* 2:28–31; 7:10–17 and 2:33–37.

[2] Lawrence E. Nelson, *The Roving Bible*, p. 56.

Van Vondel's *Lucifer* on the same theme, we can only understand either poet by going back to the book of Genesis and to references in the epistles of St. Paul. There we have the facts and their true interpretation, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is not strange that Modern unbelief as well as Ancient heresy stumbles over the record of Adam and Eve in the Garden. When men deny the Virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of our Saviour or scoff at the hope of His return from heaven, it is not strange that they consider the early chapters in Genesis a myth. The New England Primer which dominated early American education and of which seven million copies were sold before 1840, had Bible rhymes. The one that is generally selected for ridicule reads:[3]

"In Adam's fall
We sinned all."

Yet in that doggerel we have a synopsis of Paul's Epistle to the Romans and of the magnificent opening lines of *Paradise Lost:*

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe
With loss of Eden. . . ."

Doubt breeds doubt. If we tear pages from the Old Testament because of Darwin or Nietzsche we unconsciously loosen pages in the New Testament, for they are bound together in the bundle of God's revelation. As Hilaire Belloc put it in his famous poem:[4]

"Oh, he didn't believe in Adam and Eve—
He put no faith there-in;
His doubts began with the fall of man,
And he laughed at original sin."

[3] *The Roving Bible*, p. 85.
[4] *Song of the Pelagian Heresy.*

Pelagius first taught this heresy about 400 A.D. and was condemned by the whole church East and West; but the seed of his teaching bore fruit after centuries in all kinds of doubt.

Wellhausen's and Harnack's disciples also did their best to discredit the story of Adam's creation and the fall of man, and awakened an even more hostile attitude when Darwin published his *Origin of Species*[5] and the *Descent of Man.* Evolution, which began as a theory, became a dogma. The early chapters of Genesis were myth. The writer in the Encyclopedia Britannica voices the opinion of the critics. "The narrative is naive and elementary. Yahweh makes an image of moist clay, then he blows into his nostrils. The next problem is what to do with this living toy. So Yahweh plants a garden. The animals march past and as each makes a sound Adam gives them that name. And since none of them prove a suitable companion, another method must be tried. Yahweh throws the man into an anaesthetic slumber and takes a rib from his side to form a second creature. When Adam sees her he exclaims, *wo-man.*"

Such is their modern story of the first man.[6] The trouble with these Higher Critics is that they swallow the whole theory of Evolution (already in doubt) and discard Inspiration and Revelation. They not only make the account puerile and fail to see its sublimity, but they are behind the times in the field of anthropology and comparative religion. Wilhelm Schmidt, in his encyclopedic work on the *Origin of the Idea of God,* has demonstrated that the origin of religion was not by Evolution but by a primitive Revelation.[7]

Anthropology and ethnology are swinging away from the old evolutionary concept as regards primitive races. Dr. Robert

[5] E. P. Dutton, New York.
[6] Theodore H. Robinson of Cardiff in *Encyclopedia Britannica.*
[7] *Der Ursprung der Gottes Idee,* 6 vols. And abridged in English, *The Origin and Growth of Religion:* Facts and Theories. New York, 1931.

H. Lowie of the American Museum of Natural History in his important study on *Primitive Society*, says, "The time has come for eschewing the all-embracing and baseless theories of yore and to settle down to sober historical research. The Africans did not pass from a Stone Age to an Age of Copper and Bronze and then to an Iron Age . . . they passed directly from stone tools to the manufacture of iron tools" (13th Edition, N.Y., pp. 436, 437). The evolution hypothesis in religion has been overworked, and has seriously embarrassed students of religion who have grappled with the problem of sin, its universality, and the universality of its correlate, namely, *conscience*, that is a sense of sin as a subjective reality. In the history of religion, and in the study of the origin of the idea of God, we may no longer neglect the early chapters of Genesis and the statement of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Revelation, and not evolution, is the key to the origin of the idea of God and of prayer and of sacrifice.

Dr. Walter Lowrie of Princeton, in a recent study of the eclipse of Darwinism, writes: "The story of the Darwinian theory is a sorry example of scientific pride and prejudice. That story, being now finished, can be told here and it *must* be told in order to clear the air. . . ." He relates how, after the *Origin of Species* was published, he was at college in the eighties and alive to the controversy when President James McCosh supported the cause of evolution and Dr. Benjamin Warfield, also of Princeton, thundered against it. "Darwinism even as a tentative theory could not but be profoundly disquieting to Christian believers, not chiefly because it discredits the mythical account of creation in the first chapters of Genesis, but because—and this was its unique value in the eyes of unbelievers—by explaining how everything came about by chance, it made the notion of God completely superfluous."

In his scholarly article Dr. Lowrie traces the opposition to

this theory by a number of leading scientists and concludes: "I believe that in Europe, since the time of the First World War, there has been no scientist of repute who has espoused the Darwinian theory." Oswald Sprenger said of this theory that "future generations will look back upon it as one of the most pitiable delusions which ever gained sway over the human mind." That is an extreme statement but it passed unchallenged.

In 1915 Professor Louis More, a physicist of Princeton, gave definite notice that Darwinism was defunct. In his *Dogma of Evolution* he had to write the obituary, and he did it in plain words. The news was not welcomed even by the godly. "For in academic circles it is not good form to speak ill of Darwinism . . . lest the public should find out that about such an important matter scientists have for several generations been deceived and have been deceivers."[8]

It is refreshing when we open the Bible, therefore, to "lay aside all the weight" of this discarded theory and the sin of unbelief which so easily besets us and to listen to God: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness." "We can never exhaust the significance of that sentence," as John Duncan said, "for if we are in the image of God, we are to Him as the shade is to the substance."

The great preacher, Alexander Whyte, speaking of Adam, takes up the question of evolution and makes a clear distinction between biological evolution in the realm of biology and evolution as an attempt to explain origins in religion. We believe that this distinction should be carefully observed. The two problems in anthropology, to which evolution has no solution, are those of the origin of sin and the conscience on the one hand, and the other the origin of the Sinless One and redemption. Here follow the weighty words of Dr. Whyte: "Speaking for myself, as I

[8] "A Meditation on Scientific Authority" in *Theology Today*, October, 1945, Princeton, N.J.

read the great books of our modern scientific men with a delight and an advantage I cannot put enough words upon, I always miss in them—in them all and in the best of them all—a matter of more importance to me than all else they tell me. For, all the time I am reading their fascinating discoveries and speculations I still feel in myself a disturbance, a disorder, a disharmony, and a positive dislocation from the moral, and even from the material order of the universe around me and above me: a disorder and a dislocation that my scientific teachers neither acknowledge nor leave room for its redress. What about *sin?* What is *sin?* When and where did *sin* enter in the evolution of the human race and seize in this deadly way on the human heart? Why do you all so avoid and shut your eyes to Sin? And, still more, what about JESUS CHRIST? Why do I find nothing in your best text-books about HIM who was WITHOUT SIN? About Him who is more to me, and to so many more of your best readers, than all Nature."[9]

When we read once again the story of Adam's creation and fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, in spite of all difficulties in interpretation, we recall Paul's statement in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The headship of the human race is also attributed to Adam in the Epistle to the Romans in the same real sense as the headship of the new creation is found in Jesus Christ.

When the Lord God called to Adam and said unto him, "*Where art thou?*" it is the first question on the pages of the Old Testament and is, in one sense, the key to the whole Book. The entire Old Testament is a commentary in answer to that question. The consequence of the fall of Adam overshadows the remainder of Genesis and continues throughout all the historical and prophetic books. The first question in the New Testament

[9]Zwemer, *Origin of Religion,* p. 280.

is, "*Where is He?*" and, in a sense, the whole New Testament is an answer to that question, telling us who Christ is and where He is, whence He came and when He is coming again. In the sin of Adam, portrayed for us in this early record, we have the dawn of conscience, but also the dawn of our redemption and the glory of a new hope.

Paul builds on this one chapter of Genesis his greatest epistle and his great chapter on the Resurrection. The science of anthropology also in some sense corroborates the fall. In many parts of the new world there are traditions regarding a golden age, and of how man was turned out of a Paradise through some fault of his own which brought death and disaster into existence. What scientists call heredity is the burden and the blight of all humanity. Sin has three characteristics and it produces in the sinner a threefold condition: a sense of guilt before God—"hid himself"; pollution of conscience and a sense of shame—"they made themselves aprons of fig leaves"; and bondage instead of freedom—Adam lays the blame on Eve. Such a threefold cord is not easily broken by man.

We read that God created man in His own image, in knowledge and righteousness and holiness. When created, Adam apparently had a share of those divine attributes which the creature could share with the Creator. He was the apex of all the works of God. The fall of Adam was, therefore, the greatest tragedy of history. Not without reason does Archbishop Whately call the third chapter of Genesis the greatest chapter in the Bible. When we read it carefully we see that it was God who first uttered the awful word "death." "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." When Adam's hand of disobedience, however, opened the gate and let Death in, God reprieved the sentence and gave him nine hundred and thirty years respite. Then at last was fulfilled the wages of sin and dust returned to dust because "the sting of death is sin, and the

strength of sin is the law." We can only read the story with deep compassion as we see the first culprit in the hands of his Maker. If Adam had only believed God about sin and death and not hearkened to the Tempter, nor listened to Eve; if Adam could have seen that other Garden and the Son of God under the olive trees, as Alexander Whyte reminds us, how different it would have been! Adam's sin weighed on Paul's conscience or he never would have written: "Wherefore as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . . so by the obedience. . . . Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned."

But God's loving heart had compassion on Adam and on all mankind. Adam heard the voice of Jehovah "walking in the garden," so the record tells us, and we can still hear His voice walking in our gardens and speaking in mercy to those who are truly repentant.

"Remembering man is but dust—
Brother to fickle sand, and stubborn clod—
The sport of every wind of earthly lust—
Be merciful, O God!

"Remembering all flesh is grass—
Which is, today; tomorrow feeds the flame—
And now sees only darkly, through a glass—
Dear Lord, be slow to blame!

"Remembering as Adam's kin,
We share his crime, his punishment, his loss—
Consider, Lord, One guiltless of all sin—
The crown of thorns . . . the cross!"

In this very chapter we have Adam's repentance and the dawn of man's redemption, for Adam did repent or he would never have received the promise of the coming Redeemer. In Paul's conception (as a quaint old commentator has it), "Adam

and Christ stand out as the two representatives, alone and unique, with all humanity hanging at their girdles." God's question, "Adam, where art thou?" was the voice of a broken-hearted father. "When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and ran to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

It is an astonishing fact that the first Evangelist was God Himself and that the Evangel was preached to Adam and Eve in Paradise before they lost it. It was preached by word and by the symbol of a sacrament world-wide and age-long. We read: "I will set enmity (not peace or compromise) between thee and the woman. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; and with the word of promise there was the institution of sacrifice symbolized by the "coats of skin" which God made for Adam and Eve. Delitzsch and other commentators find a great doctrine of atonement for sin here in the germ. Hear what Melanchthon says: In his *Postilla* for the first Sunday in Advent he reminds us that the first Advent of the Son of God took place in the Garden of Eden. "The divine Logos or Son of God Himself addressed Adam in the giving of the promise, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head'; and while these words were proclaimed outwardly, the Logos himself was working also within the hearts of Adam and Eve, and cheering them with His comfort, lest they should fall into everlasting death."

In after ages this Logos was always present in the Church, as Irenaeus truly says, "He spake with the Fathers and was with them in their heaviest conflicts. He was with Noah in the ark, with Abraham in exile, with Joseph in prison, with Daniel among the lions." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

How did Adam repent? Al Ghazali has a great chapter on *Repentance* in which he says it includes three factors: knowledge of sin, sorrow for sin, and forsaking of sin. Now we find

all three in Adam. He went out of Paradise and walked softly all his days; he saw the death of Abel and the doom of Cain. He lived to taste death and the bitter remorse of sin many, many times before the nine hundred and thirty years of his life ended and he, too, died.

How did Adam die? And what was his latter end? The Scripture does not tell us who was present at the funeral of the father of our race. Yet we know that he died, and so death passed upon all men. God's sentence was pronounced in Paradise and not carried out until more than nine hundred years later. For God did not deal with Adam according to his iniquity but like as a father pitieth his children, so God pitied Adam and Eve. "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." And in Him we see the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in the dawn of conscience. We recall Cardinal Newman's greatest hymn:

"O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

"O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail;

"And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence, and His very Self,
And essence all-Divine.

"O generous love! that He, who smote
In man for man the foe,
The double agony in Man
For man should undergo;

"And in the garden secretly,
And on the cross on high,
Should teach His brethren, and inspire
To suffer and to die."

O the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of God's love for Adam. One of our American poets, Fay Inchfawn, has caught the inspiration of this tragedy in a very modern but also a deeply significant poem:

"At Adam's Funeral, his race
Went softly, with averted face,
Bearing with awe, because they must,
The red dust, back to the red dust.

"Bewildered and sore amazed,
Legions of angels gazed
To see the slow procession pass,
Over the windswept, short-lived grass,
Rounding the corner.

"For, close behind His dead,
With lowly bending head,
And weary feet that bled,
Came the chief Mourner.

"O, softly, solemnly,
Slowly and lovingly,
Following, following,
Over the sod;
Following mournfully,
Heartsore and drearily,
Who could it ever be?—
Yes, it was God!"

O God, Thou art the Potter and we are the clay. We are the work of Thy hands. Have mercy upon Thy whole creation. Restore what we have lost by Adam's disobedience through the obedience and merits of the Second Adam, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

II

ABRAḤAM, the Friend of God

II

Abraham, the Friend of God

IN THE *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,* Oliver Wendell Hohnes remarks, in a rather condescending manner, "The Hebrew patriarchs had small libraries, if any, and yet I think if we could ask Abraham to dine with us men of letters next Saturday, we should feel honored by his company." There are two errors in this reference to Abraham the Father of all believers. The first is pardonable because in the days of Hohnes the libraries of Abraham's day at Ur of the Chaldees had not been discovered. The second is that no real Semite would accept an invitation to dine at a club! Oriental hospitality always finds its center in the home of the host. There were no hotels in all Arabia until oil was discovered. There is no question, however, that had Abraham received and accepted an invitation to dine at the Harvard Club (two imponderables) the other dinner guests would soon have learned that "those great-grandfathers of the Church saw more in the cloud than we do in the fire." No one is worthy to appraise the greatness of Abraham unless he too is in some humble sense *a friend of God.*

For Abraham is called by James and Isaiah and Jehoshaphat *The Friend of God* (James 2:23; Isa. 41:8 and II Chron. 20:7), and his common title among all Arabs and the whole Moslem world is *Ibrahim Khalil Allah,* (Abraham, the Bosom-friend of Allah). His grave at Hebron is the common shrine for the three great theistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our Saviour Jesus Christ and His apostles bore testimony to Abraham's

faith, character and preeminence in Jewish history (John 8:31; Acts 7:2; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8; James 2:21–24). One might almost say that next to Moses his moral stature towers above all the Old Testament characters. The story of Abraham's life begins at chapter twelve in Genesis and continues until the middle of the twenty-fifth chapter where we read of his death at the age of one hundred threescore and fifteen years. "Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years; and was gathered unto his people" (Gen. 25:8). Like Enoch he walked with God and went to dwell with Him after life's long and strenuous pilgrimage.

Robert Burns tells, in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," how at family worship in Scotland

> "They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
> They tune their *hearts* by far the noblest aim;
> The priest-like father reads the Sacred page
> How Abram was the friend of God on High."

Abraham has travelled from Ur of the Chaldees across the seven seas, the continents and islands until his name is a household word and his story is read in nearly a thousand languages.

So we see the fulfillment even here "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Orientals always emphasize the importance of names. To them a name stands for reality. With a change of office or calling there is often a change of name; even as Jacob became Israel after his wrestling with the Angel. Among the Arabs today, many personal names are compounds of the name of Allah. Like our Dorothy and Theodore they have *Abdullah*, the slave of God; *Dhaif Allah*, the guest of God; *Khair Allah*, the goodness of God, etc. It is also the case in the Bible: *Elijah*, Jehovah is my God; *Eliezer*, God is my strength; *Nathaneal*, the gift of God; *Daniel*, the judgment of God; *Ezekiel*, my

strength is God; *Emmanuel*, God with us. Then also we have special names given. Daniel is called "greatly beloved"; David the man after God's heart; Ezekiel, son-of-man. But Abraham surpasses all; he is "the father of all believers," the head of the covenant promises to Israel, and "*the Friend of God.*"

There is a beautiful story told in Moslem tradition as to the occasion when Abraham first received this name. Commenting on the verse in the Koran (4:124), "For God took Abraham as his friend," Baidawi says: "Abraham in a time of dearth sent to a friend of his in Egypt for a supply of corn: but the friend denied him, saying, in his excuse, that though there was a famine in their country also, yet, had it been for Abraham's own family, he would have sent what he desired, but he knew he wanted it only to entertain his guests, and give away to the poor, according to his usual hospitality. The servants whom Abraham had sent on this message, being ashamed to return empty, to conceal the matter from their neighbors, filled their sacks with fine white sand, which in the East pretty much resembles meal. Abraham being informed by his servants on their return of their ill success, the concern he was under threw him into a sleep, and in the meantime Sarah, knowing nothing of what had happened, opening one of the sacks, found good flour in it, and immediately set to making bread. Abraham awaking, and smelling the new bread, asked her whence she had the flour. 'Why,' says she, 'from your friend in Egypt.' 'Nay,' replied the patriarch, 'it must have come from no other than *my friend*, God Almighty.' "

No wonder that Doughty, the great Arabian traveller, took the name *Khalil Allah* on his dangerous journeys; and the desert Arabs learned to love him as well as know him by that name. The name Abraham occurs more than three hundred times in twenty-seven books of the Old and New Testament. It is writ large in the Psalms and Isaiah but especially by Paul in his Epistles, and in Luke's Gospel.

To all of these writers, as to the Jewish people down the centuries, Abraham was not a myth or a mere tribal name (as Liberal critics assert) but a historic character. Our Saviour spoke of him as a person and not as a tribe (Matt. 8:11; 22:32; Luke 13:28; 16:24; John 8:56). He said that Abraham rejoiced to see His day; that He was before Abraham and greater than Abraham; and that the heaven of rest was rightly called Abraham's bosom; he, moreover, agreed with the national consciousness that the Jews had Abraham for their patriarchal father.

In tracing briefly the life and character of this patriarch—two questions engage our attention: Why was Abraham especially called the friend of God? And how "by walking in the footprints of Abraham" we too can become friends of God?

In literature and in life true friendship is the ruling passion. By the warp of time and the woof of circumstance, God Himself knits two hearts together and whether this be in great fiction or on the pages of history, the result is an unbroken, loyal, sacrificial friendship.

When Zeno was asked what a friend was, he replied, "Another I." And in the ancient Fables of Bidpai we read that "A friend is as it were another self to whom we impart our most secret thoughts, who partakes of our joy and comforts us in our affliction."

In some such sense God was the friend of Abraham and Abraham was the friend of God. The first stanza of our familiar hymn sums up the spiritual life of Abraham and the words of Jesus, "He rejoiced to see my day and was glad."

"What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear;
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer."

All through the narrative told in thirteen short chapters of Genesis, Abraham seems to be on very familiar terms with the

Almighty. Look at the record and ask yourself whether any other man in the Old Testament talked with God, walked with God, believed in God, fought for God, and prayed to God so boldly as did Abraham. Here is the astonishing record of his life in summary.

The history of the life of the great patriarch falls into four periods, each marked by a special divine revelation. The first period (ch. 12–14) begins with his call and emigration to Canaan; the second (ch. 15,16) deals with the promise of an heir and the formation of a covenant; the third (ch. 17–21) tells of the establishment of that great covenant through the change of Abram's name to Abraham and the introduction of the rite of circumcision; the fourth period (ch. 22–25) relates to the trial of Abraham's faith in the offering up of Isaac. In each of these periods of his long life, Abraham stands out as the man of dauntless faith and the friend of God. All through the story of his life we see a faith that falters only to rise again; a humility before God and man that adds to his moral stature; a self-sacrifice after the field of battle or in the dark hour of temptation; a benevolence and gentleness toward others illuminating the greatness of his soul.

The story does not gloss over nor condone the faults in Abraham's character. It tells how he once used deceit to protect his beautiful wife, Sarah, from the alien Egyptians; and how he tried to forestall God's promise by human contrivance in the case of Ishmael. But Wordsworth, in his commentary, remarks with deep insight: "The frank portrayal of the weaknesses of the patriarchs only strengthens our faith in the veracity of the Pentateuch." Moreover, we must not forget the age in which they lived and their environment when we try to sit in judgment on the sins of the Patriarchs.

Nothing reveals inner character more truly than prayer. And the prayers of Abraham are the strongest proof of his faith,

hope, and charity—and the greatest of these in the recorded prayers is his charity. When God appeared to him at Bethel, we read that as soon as he pitched his roving tent, he built an altar and called upon the name of Jehovah. His unselfish conduct toward Lot was an unspoken prayer which brought the answer from heaven, "Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward, southward, eastward and westward; all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it . . . and to thy seed forever." So Lot and his wife settled in Sodom, but of Abraham we read that he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre and again built an altar to Jehovah.

In rescuing Lot from the raid of the four Arabian sheikhs, Abraham showed his courage but also his reliance upon God. To the King of Sodom he said, "I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a shoe-latchet of all the spoil." What unselfishness! Then how childlike he pleads with God for a child of his own, after God had said, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward"—"O Lord, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless . . . Behold to me thou hast given no seed." Then in reply God bade him "tell the stars if thou be able to tell them . . . so shall thy seed be!" "And he believed in Jehovah; and He counted it to him for righteousness."

After that we see Abraham in his Gethsemane when "the horror of a great darkness fell upon him" (ch. 15) and he learned that his seed would, for the space of four hundred years, be strangers and slaves "in a land that is not theirs."

Again we have his pathetic prayer for the son of Hagar, Ishmael (who was also Abraham's son): "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!" (ch. 21). This earliest missionary collect is still used in the Liturgy of the Moravian Brethren as they pray for the Moslem world.

And who can abbreviate by a single word the surpassing

revelation of Abraham's power of intercession in his plea to God for mercy on Sodom. There is nothing like it in the whole Bible. The Friend of God pleading with the Judge of all the earth to do right! Read the inspired text in chapter eighteen of Genesis from the words: "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city. . . ." And follow his pleading and intercession *down* the arithmetical scale; 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, 10; and *upward* in his dauntless faith and six "peradventures" of persistence until the Almighty says, "I will not destroy it for the tens sake." Did ever a man take hold of God like that unless he was sure he was the friend of God?

Add to all this Abraham's prayer for Abimelech and their covenant together; the silent prayer as he ascended Moriah, "God will provide a lamb for the burnt-offering, my son"; also his prayer when he bound Isaac on the wood. The *'Aqada* or Binding prayer is found in the New Year's Day ritual of Judaism: "Remember in our favour, O Lord our God, the oath which Thou hast sworn to our father Abraham on Mount Moriah; consider the binding of his son Isaac upon the altar when he suppressed his love in order to do Thy will with a whole heart! Thus may Thy love suppress Thy wrath against us, and through Thy great goodness may the heart of Thine anger be turned away from Thy people, Thy city and Thy heritage. . . . Remember to-day in mercy in favour of his seed, the binding of Isaac."

There are many interesting apocryphal stories relating to Abraham in the Jewish Talmud. Some of them have also come to us in Moslem tradition and in the later Persian poets.

In the Koran (VI:74–82) we have the story of Abraham rebuking his father Terah for worshiping the sun, the moon and the stars because they were not steadfast but set in the

West. And in Surah XXI: 52–75 is the curious story of Abraham confounding the idolaters by breaking all their idols one day in a temple and placing an axe near the largest image to indicate that he it was who had wielded the axe against his companions. When they grew angry and threatened to burn Abraham in the fire, Allah intervened and commanded the fire to grow cold for Abraham. This story is a favorite one among Moslems.

Many of these Jewish and Moslem legends are of little worth but we find one that is very beautiful and found a place in Western literature. In the *Bustan*, or "Flower Garden" of the Persian poet, Saadi, there is this beautiful tale (we quote from the prose version of Jeremy Taylor):[1] "One day when Abraham sat at his tent-door, according to his custom, waiting to entertain strangers, he espied an old man stooping and leaning on his staffe, weary with age and travelle, coming toward him, who was an hundred years of age; he received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, caused him to sit down; but observing that the old man ate and prayed not, nor begged for a blessing on his meat, asked him why he did not worship the God of heaven. The old man told him that he worshipped the fire only, and acknowledged no other God: at which answer Abraham grew so zealously angry, that he thrust the old man out of his tent, and exposed him to all the evils of the night and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to him and asked him where the stranger was; he replied, 'I thrust him away because he did not worship thee'; God answered him, 'I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonored me, and couldst thou not endure him one night, when he gave thee no trouble?' Upon this, saith the story,

[1] *The Liberty of Prophesying*, p. 606. Benjamin Franklin and others have given their version of the story in slightly different form. It doubtless has Jewish origin.

Abraham fetcht him back again, and gave him hospitable entertainment and wise instruction. Go thou and do likewise, and thy charity will be rewarded by the God of Abraham."

The fruit of friendship, according to Lord Bacon, is like the pomegranate which has multitude of kernels. There are many elements in true friendship. Its beauty is like the sevenfold colors of pure light seen through a prism. Almost every incident in the life-story of Abraham illustrates his friendship with God. But four factors of the master-passion are dominant in Abraham: loyalty, affection, mutual confidence and sacrifice. When he heard God's call in Ur of the Chaldees he obeyed. "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out unto a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country. . . . For he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8–10). His unswerving obedience to God's call made him the father of the faithful as well as the heir of all the promises. His faith was a perfect illustration of the acrostic I once saw on a Salvation Army blackboard:

	Forsaking
What is faith?	All
Read the first	I
letters and see.	Take
	Him

Abraham's loyalty was not greater than his love. The unparalleled story of the father and his only son Isaac ascending Mount Moriah; the altar, the wood, the knife and the fire; the hand outstretched to slay his son. And then God's voice "Lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12).

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who keepest covenant to all generations, make us true sons of Abraham, Thy friend, and may we be known by our walk and conversation as friends of God. Amen.

III

HAGAR and ISHMAEL

III

Hagar and Ishmael

IN THE LIBRARY of the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick, New Jersey, there is a marble statue of Hagar and Ishmael. It was placed there by Doctor John G. Lansing who was instrumental, under God, in the organization of The Arabian Mission in 1899. He was professor of Old Testament languages and inspired his students with love for Hebrew, not only, but for Arabia and the Arabs. Born in Damascus and conversant with Arabic literature, he spoke often of the neglected Peninsula and of the Prodigal Son of the Old Testament–Ishmael.

The tragic story of Hagar and Ishmael is indeed a strange episode in the life of Abraham the friend of God. Hagar, the mother of the Arabian patriarch, seems to have occupied a prominent place in Abraham's household and appears to have brought to that position not only mental gifts but also an inward participation in the faith of the God of Abraham. She was probably added to the family of faith during Abraham's sojourn in Egypt and occupied the same position toward the female servants that Eliezer of Damascus did to the male servants. It is when she was driven forth into the wilderness by the jealous harshness of Sarah that we have the first revelation of God regarding her seed. "The angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur." "And He said, Whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her. . . . I will multiply thy seed exceedingly that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold thou art with child, and shalt bear a son and shalt call his name Ishmael (*God will hear*); because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that seeth me."

It is plain from the context that the angel of the Lord and the Lord Himself are here identified; it was the angel of Jehovah, the angel of the covenant or the Christ of the Old Testament. Why should this "angel" first appear to the Egyptian bondwoman? Is it that the Lord always reveals Himself first to the poorest, most distressed and receptive hearts or was it the special office of the covenant angel to seek "that which was lost" from the patriarchal church at its very beginning? Lange suggests in his commentary that the "Angel of Jehovah, as the Christ who was to come through Isaac, had a peculiar reason for assisting Hagar since she for the sake of the future Christ is involved in this sorrow." In any case the special revelation and the special promise was given to Hagar not only, but to her seed. Christ, if we may so express it, outlines the future history and character of the Ishmaelites as well as their strength and glory; but He also gives them a spiritual promise in the God-given name, Ishmael (*Elohim will hear*). Without this, the theophany loses its true character. Ishmael, as the child of Abraham, could not be left undistinguishable among the heathen. It was for Abraham's sake that the revelation included the unborn child in its promises.

The fulfillment of the promise that Ishmael's seed should multiply exceedingly has never been more clearly stated than by the geographer Ritter: "Arabia, whose population consists to a large extent of Ishmaelites, is a living fountain of men whose streams for thousands of years have poured themselves far and wide to the east and west. Before Mohammed its tribes were found in all border-Asia, in the East Indies as early as the middle ages; and in all North Africa it is the cradle of all the wandering hordes. Along the whole Indian ocean down to Molucca they had their settlements in the middle ages; they spread along the coast to Mozambique; their caravans crossed India to China, and in Europe they peopled Southern Spain and ruled it for seven hundred years." Where there has been such clear fulfillment of the promise of natural increase, is there no ground that *God will hear* and give spiritual blessing also, and that Ishmael "shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" in the new covenant of grace?

Thirteen years after the first promise to Ishmael we hear the promise renewed just after the institution of circumcision, the sign of the covenant of faith. "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might (even yet) live before Thee. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. . . ." What is the significance of Abraham's prayer for Ishmael? Is it probable that he merely asks for temporal prosperity and for length of life? This is the idea of some commentators, but none of them explain why the prayer asks that Ishmael may live "*before God*." Keil and others, more correctly we think, regard the prayer of Abraham as arising out of his anxiety lest Ishmael should not have *any* part in the blessings of the covenant. The fact that the answer

of God contains no denial of the prayer of Abraham is in favor of this interpretation.

In the prayer Abraham expresses his anticipation of an indefinite neglect of Ishmael which was painful to his parental heart. He asks for him, therefore, a life from God in the highest sense. Else what does the circumcision of Ishmael mean? The sealing or ratifying of the covenant of God with Abraham *through Isaac's seed*, embraces not only the seed of Isaac, but all those who in a wider sense are sharers of the covenant, Ishmael and his descendants. And however much the Arabs may have departed from the *faith* of Abraham, they have for all these centuries remained faithful to the *sign* of the old covenant by the rite of circumcision. This is one of the most remarkable facts of history. *Circumcision is not once alluded to in the Koran*, and Moslem writers offer no explanation for the omission. Yet the custom is universal in Arabia, and from them it passed over with other traditions to all the Moslem world. The Moslem dates circumcision from Abraham and circumcise at a late period. The Arabs in "the time of ignorance" also practiced the rite; an uncircumcised person is unknown even among those Bedouins who know nothing of Islam save the name of the prophet.

"As for Ishmael I have heard thee." For the third time we read of a special revelation to prove God's love for the son of the bondmaid. In the pathetic story of Hagar's expulsion, Ishmael is the central figure (Gen. 21:9–22). His mocking was its cause; for *his* sake it was grievous in Abraham's sight to expel them. To Ishmael again is there a special promise, "because he is thy seed." When the water is spent in the bottle and Hagar turns away from seeing the death of the child, it was not her weeping but the lad's prayer that brought deliverance from heaven. "And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God

hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him by thine hand; for I will make of him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad."

No less does this history show the moral beauty of Hagar's character, her tender mother love and all the beautiful traits of a maternal solicitude than it does the repentance of Ishmael. God heard his voice; God forgave his sinful mocking; God confirmed His promise; God saved his life; God was with the lad. The Providence of God watched over Ishmael. Long years afterwards he seems to have visited his father Abraham, for we read that when the patriarch died in a good old age "his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah." No mention is made here of the sons of Keturah. And twice in the Bible the generations of Ishmael are recorded in full in order to bind together the prophecies of Genesis with the Messianic promises of Isaiah for the seed of Ishmael.[1]

The twelve princes, sons of Ishmael, whose names are recorded "by their towns and their castles" were undoubtedly the patriarchs of so many Arab tribes. Some of the names can be distinctly traced through history and others are easily identified with modern clans in Arabia.

Doughty calls Ishmael "the father of the North Arabian tribes" and specially records instances where they trace their descent back to the son of Hagar. The Koreish tribe of Mecca from which Mohammed traces his lineage, boasts that they are the true sons of Abraham through Ishmael.[2]

It is generally known that the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah is the gem of missionary prophecy in the Old Testament; but it does not occur to everyone that a large portion of it consists of

[1] Gen. xxv:11–18, and I Chron. 1:28.

[2] *Travels in Arabia.* Vol. I:56, 229; Vol. II:355.

special promises for Arabia. "The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah (Sons of Kethrah, Gen. xxv: 1–5); all they from Sheba (South Arabia or Yemen) shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance upon mine altar and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?"

These verses, read in connection with the grand array of promises that precede them, leave no room for doubt that the sons of Ishmael have a large place in this coming glory of the Lord and the brightness of His rising. It has only been delayed by our neglect to evangelize Northern Arabia, but God will keep His promise yet and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul among the camel-drivers and shepherds of Arabia. And then shall be fulfilled that other promise significantly put in Isaiah 42 for this part of the peninsula: "Sing unto the Lord a new song and His praise from the end of the earth. . . . let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains." It is all there with geographical accuracy and also up-to-date; "*cities in the wilderness*," that is Nejd under its present government; Kedar forsaking the nomad tent and becoming villagers; and the rock-dwellers of Medain Salih! "And I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight." The only proper name, the only geographical centre of the entire chapter is *Kedar*.

After I had been a missionary in Arabia for seven years, it was my good fortune to meet an aged and learned Dutch

clergyman who was deeply interested in the Arabian Mission. He took me to his small library and introduced me to one of the finest missionary poems in the wide world of literature, the epic of Hagar by the celebrated Dutch poet, Isaac Da Costa. A pupil of the great poet Bilderdijk, of Spanish-Portuguese Jewish descent, his poetry shows the elements of Dutch education, oriental passion, and love for the Word of Jehovah. Rabbi Mayer Kaiserling pays tribute to his character in a sketch of his life and work contributed to the Jewish Encyclopedia: "However severely his religious views and efforts be censured, his character, no less than his genius, was respected by his contemporaries. Although he wrote much on missionary matters, he is distinguished from many other converts in that, to the end of his life, he felt only reverence and love for his former co-religionists, was deeply interested in their past history, and often took their part."

Soon after his conversion to Christianity Da Costa became one of the most active opponents of the prevailing rationalism. He was a theologian and a historian, but above all a poet; the uncrowned poet-laureate of Holland until the day of his death, April 28, 1860.

Into one hundred and sixty-eight rhymed couplets the genius of Da Costa has condensed the story of Ishmael and Islam in their origin and development. He has woven together the woof of Bible promise and the warp of Arabian history into one beautiful seamless garment of poetry. To give a worthy rendering of the whole, or even of some, lofty stanzas would be hopeless. Parts of the poem yield to a sort of rendering in English which may, perhaps, be called a translation. At least, they are as literal as I could make them while adhering to the measure, form and stanzas of the original, while I lived in Bahrain, Arabia among the sons of Hagar.

Addressing Arabia, the poem opens:

"What marvels met thine eye, thou Orient desert Queen!
Eternal land of drought, of crags and rocks between
A shifty sea of sand, vast, limitless . . . .
A sea of solitude, oppressive, comfortless . . . .
Whose waves of sand and rock refresh no aching eye,
But leave earth barren 'neath a burning sky.
How oft beneath those skies the storm-winds thou hast seen.
Fiercer than oven-blast, hotter than mid-day beam,
Chainlike unfolding in their onward path,
Whilst knelt the caravan obedient to their wrath;
Until, storm-built and driven by the blast,
The simoon's awful chariot had rolled past.

. . . . . .

But in the solemn hour, recalled by poet's muse,
Silent the desert wastes. The rushing storm winds lose
Their faintest whisper. Solitude. Save one!
With bold, yet downcast eye, a woman walks alone.
Sorrow hath filled her soul."

Then follows the vision of Hagar and the promise of Jehovah. The second part tells of Ishmael's mocking, the exile, Hagar's prayer, and the renewed promise of God to her seed:

"Ishmael, thou shalt not die! The desert waste,
Which dared to boast itself thy grave, shall taste
And tell thy glory. . . ."

Here the Bedouin life is sketched in a few matchless stanzas portraying the ship of the desert and the Arabian steed—the peculiar twofold treasure of the peninsula from time immemorial. (So much, in fact, is the horse identified with Arabia that Colonel Tweedie entitled his large and important volume of researches on Northern Arabia, *The Arabian Horse: His Country and His People!*)

Passing by the centuries of silence, the poet suddenly places

before us the Saracen invasion and its onward sweep into North Africa and Spain:

. . . . "They leap upon the lance, but lances wound them not;
A hemisphere at once falls to the Arab's lot.
And, as a new plowed field sown thick with summer hail
Pressed from the thunder cloud, so swift their nomad trail
Sweeps everywhere along . . . . . .
The day of vengeance falls! The Koran and its sword!
Those half-truths, wrapped in fascinating lore
Your idols can confound, but not your God restore.
Yet conquer must that Christendom which sold
Her substance for a form; for glitter lost her gold,
And thus waxed weak. Egypt, once more obey
The nomad's law, like Hyksos rule in earlier day!
Proud Alexandria, bow! Yield, yield thy costly store.
Thy libraries of learning and their treasured lore,
With all thy boasted schools? The latest blood
Of old Numidia now lies reeking on the sod,
Nor Carthager, nor Vandal, can ward off the blow . . . .
All Africa's at stake, and Europe shares her woe.
They've mounted high Gibraltar, lovely Spain
Lies just beyond . . . 'tis Christian but in name;
The fierce West-Goth sees all his temples sacked
Till turns the tide of time by greater Power backed.
Alas! Still ebbs the flood. No Pyrenees can bar
The eagle's lofty flight nor stay the scimitar.
Awake, ye north winds, and drive back the horde
Barbarian; Karel, rise, thou Martel, break their sword!
God's hand makes true Thy name. Regain our loss
And save from Crescent rule the lands that love the
Cross. . . ."

Next, we have in the poem a full-length portrait of the genius prophet, Mohammed, the greatest of the sons of Hagar. These stanzas defy translation because of their beauty and idiom and marvellous condensation. There is often a volume of thought in a single line, and nowhere do I know of a more just, generous,

and yet critically truthful delineation of Mohammed's character.

The seventh division of the poem opens, as do all the others, by addressing Hagar. But this time as the *bondmaid;* Ishmael in subjection to Isaac; the Cross rising triumphant above the Crescent:

"Mother of Ishmael! The word that God hath spoken
Never hath failed the least, nor was His promise broken.
Whether in judgment threatened or as blessing given;
Whether for time and earth or for eternal heaven,
To Esau or to Jacob. . . .
The patriarch prayed to God, while bowing in the dust:
'Oh that before thee Ishmael might live!'—His prayer, his trust.
Nor was that prayer despised, *that* promise left alone
Without fulfillment. For the days shall come
When Ishmael shall bow his haughty, chieftain head
Before that Greatest Chief of Isaac's royal seed.
Thou, favored Solomon, hast first fulfillment seen
Of Hagar's promise, when came suppliant Sheba's queen.
Next Araby the blest brought Bethlehem's newborn King,
Her myrrh and spices, gold and offering.
Again at Pentecost they came, first-fruits of harvest vast;
When, to adore the name of Jesus, at the last
To Zion's glorious hill the nation's joy to share
The scattered flocks of Kedar all are gathered there,
Nebajoth, Hefa, Midian. . . . .
Then Israel shall know Whose heart their hardness broke,
Whose side they pierced, Whose curse they dared invoke.
And then, while at His feet they mourn His bitter death,
Receive His pardon. . . .
Before Whose same white throne Gentile and Jew shall meet
With Parthian, Roman, Greek, the far North and the South,
From Mississippi's source to Ganges' giant mouth,
And every tongue and tribe shall join in one new song,
Redemption! Peace on earth and good-will unto men;
The purpose of all ages unto all ages sure. Amen.
Glory unto the Father! Glory the Lamb, once slain,
Spotless for human guilt, exalted now to reign!

And to the Holy Ghost, life-giver, whose refreshing
Makes all earth's deserts bloom with living showers of blessing!

. . . . . .

"Mother of Ishmael! I see thee yet once more,
Thee, under burning skies and on a waveless shore!
Thou comfortless, soul storm-tossed, tempest-shaken,
Heart full of anguish and of hope forsaken,
Thou, too, didst find at last God's glory all thy stay!
He came. He spake to thee. He made thy night His day.
As then, so now. Return to Sarah's tent
And Abraham's God, and better covenant,
And sing with Mary, through her Saviour free,
'God of my life, Thou hast looked down on me.' "

Hagar is not referred to in the Koran by name, although Ishmael her son is mentioned several times. In *Surah* IV: 161 it is said of him that he received revelations; in *Surah* XIX: 55 he is called a messenger and a prophet; and in *Surah* II: 119 he, along with Abraham, is commanded to purify the holy house at Mecca.

The traditions are more explicit. According to the Moslem story, Ishmael helped his father Abraham build the temple at Mecca. When the work was completed, Abraham abandoned the boy with his mother in a barren country. Afflicted by thirst, Hagar ran to and fro between the hills al-Safa and al-Narwa looking for water. Gabriel called to her and the result was the spring of Zamzam. The sacred waters of this miraculous spring are now used by the pilgrims.

A PRAYER FOR ARABIA

We beseech Thee, O God, that Ishmael might live before Thee; so that this prayer of Abraham, after all these centuries, might find fulfillment in the full triumph of Thy Gospel throughout Arabia, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

IV

JACOB'S Ladder and JACOB'S Wrestling

IV

Jacob's Ladder and Jacob's Wrestling

JACOB'S CHARACTER offers such contradictions and contrasts as that of no other of the patriarchs. There seems to be a unity in the character of Abraham and even of Isaac that we do not find in Jacob. It is especially in comparison with Esau, his twin brother, that Jacob comes out second best from the human standpoint. James Russell Lowell is not alone in preferring Esau. At the age of twenty he wrote: " 'Bless me, even me also, O my father!' What a passage in the Bible that is! I never could and never can read it without tears in my eyes. Esau was the favorite to my boyish soul, and is still. I had a fellow-feeling for him, for he was a careless, scatter-brained, uncalculating sort of fellow, in which respect some others are born into the world like him."[1] Yet Jacob, with all his glaring faults of character, his deceit and self-seeking, his waywardness, even after God's call, and his constant attempts to further his own interests, was the child of promise and of the covenant.

His name, Jacob, in popular etymology, signified the *supplanter* or the *heeler*. But, as some scholars affirm, the name is rather related to a South Arabian or Ethiopic root, *Akaba, he whom* (*God*) *guards or protects*. Born when his father was sixty years old, he became a quiet, inoffensive man, dwelling in tents, as shepherd. He was the favorite of his mother Rebekah, while his father preferred Esau. One day Esau came in from hunting, faint with hunger. Jacob happened to have a pottage

[1] *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, Vol. I, p. 44.

of lentils ready boiled, but he offered hospitality to his brother only when he had compelled him to sell his birthright. Later there was positive fraud at the instigation of his mother, Rebekah. Isaac at the time was over one hundred and thirty years old and nearly blind. Jacob, dressed in Esau's raiment with his hands and neck made artificially hairy, impersonated his brother and at his father's bed-side lied to obtain the primogeniture blessing from the patriarch. It is an ugly story of deceit; but all is so true to life and to man's sinful nature that Jacob's dealings have become a proverb. God over-ruled all for His purpose.

Jacob incurred Esau's righteous wrath after this second wrong and he resolved that when his father died, he would kill his brother (ch. 27:1–41). At the end of the story, however, we see Esau reconciled to Jacob and both of them present at Isaac's funeral (ch. 35:29). The reconciliation of the brothers seems to have been permanent.

It is not our purpose here to delineate the character of Esau or of Jacob, but to point out that, with all his faults, Jacob was a man of prayer and that in two crises of his checkered life he had a vision of God.

It is not the virtues of Jacob that receive emphasis in the Old Testament narrative, but his reliance on God and God's grace bestowed on one who himself felt his unworthiness. "Blessed is the man who hath the God of Jacob for his help"—that is the keynote to the number of references to Jacob in the Bible. Under his twofold name, Jacob and Israel, we find three hundred and sixty references to him in the Old and New Testaments. In more than twenty-eight of the sixty-six books, his name is recorded. The personal name became a proper name for the whole of the Chosen race and today the Jews themselves have named their promised land, *Israel.*

Before we see Jacob at Bethel or at Peniel—the two great crises in his life—let us refresh ourselves, as our Saviour did,

at Jacob's Well. No other patriarch has had so enduring and so noble a monument. How well I remember the day I drank of its sweet water when I visited Palestine. It is at Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph (John 4:5, 6,12; Gen. 33:18–20). Tradition, going back as far as 333 A.D. and accepted by Jews, Christians and Mohammedans, agrees with the woman of Samaria that from this well "Jacob and his sons and his cattle drank." It is one of the best authenticated holy sites in all Palestine. The mouth of the well is cut out of one stone (now horribly disfigured by an ugly iron contrivance for drawing up water). The depth of the well is eighty feet and the diameter nine feet.[2] When one stands by such an ancient well and recalls its history, he can agree with Ernest Renan that "Palestine is the fifth gospel."

Nor can we forget that it was God's covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which, fulfilled in Christ, makes it a Holy Land to Christians.

I. *Jacob's Ladder* is one of the most remarkable pictures William Blake drew in water-color, with fertile imagination behind a skillful brush. The youth lies asleep on a hill-top, his shepherd's crook in his hand. "Ending by his pillow and descending from a vast golden sun on high, whence emanate floods of bright yellow beams, is a white spiral stairway or ladder, upon which countless angels and girls and little children are passing up and down. Foremost among them is a winged angel bearing a basket of bread upon his head, followed by a damsel with a jug of wine. Others are engaged in various delights; embracing one another, leading little children, one carrying a scroll, others a book, compasses, or a musical instrument —all joyful and beautiful. Beneath the rays of the sun is deep blue sky, star-spangled."[3]

[2] *Handbook of Palestine and Transjordan* by Henry C. Luke.

[3] A. G. B. Russell, *The Letters of William Blake*, p. xxxi.

That is the interpretation of a mystic and poet as well as an artist. The simple words of Genesis have, however, fascinated artist and poet alike. Here they are. "And Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed and behold, a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. 28:10–15).

It is on these five verses that Sarah Flower Adams wrote (1840) what someone has called one of the greatest Christian hymns and one of the best beloved: "*Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer to Thee.*" Every stanza is a picture of the lonely exile, the sun gone down, lying with his head on a stone and yet seeing angels beckoning and ever drawing nearer and nearer on the steps that lead to heaven. Until "with joyful wing cleaving the sky" Jacob flies upward and we, with Jacob, reach the top of the ladder and see God face to face.

The hymn is a great interpretation of the dream of Jacob and has had a great history. But we have a clearer insight into the dream of Jacob in the words of our Saviour to Nathanael (John 1:51): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Our Jacob's ladder is the Son of Man resting in His humanity on the earth close to each believer and in His deity reaching beyond earth to the throne of His glory and majesty.

Francis Thompson, in his poem *The Kingdom of God,* has two beautiful references to the ladder of Jacob and brings it close to each of us.

> "The angels keep their ancient places;—
> Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
> 'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces
> That miss the many-splendored thing.
> . . . Upon thy so sore loss
> Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
> Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross."

Bethel was the name Jacob gave to the place where he raised the stone of remembrance—*the House of God.* How many tabernacles, churches, and hospitals across the wide world bear that beautiful name! And the place itself became famous in the later history of Israel. First, as sacred to Jehovah, and afterwards, alas, under King Jeroboam as a center of idolatry (I Kings 13:1–32).

And as for the stone itself, which was Jacob's pillow, that also, by a strange superstition, became famous; it is called the "stone of destiny" on which the monarchs of Scotland and England were crowned. Here is the story as told in the history of Scotland.[4]

John Hill Burton, in his history of Scotland, tells how King Edward I took away from the Abbey of Scone the Stone of Destiny—the paladium of Scotland. "It was enshrined in a chair or throne, on which the kings of Scots were wont to be crowned. Its legendary history was that it was the pillow on which Jacob reposed when he saw the vision of the angels ascending and

[4] John Hill Burton, *History of Scotland,* Vol. II, pp. 172–175.

descending the ladder, and that it was brought over by Scota, that daughter of Pharaoh from whom the Scots line of monarchs was descended. In terms of a prophetic couplet, it was its virtue that wherever it might be placed there would the Scots be supreme; and it will easily be believed that the prophecy was recalled when, in after days, the monarchs of the Stewart dynasty sat on it to be crowned in Westminster. . . . King Edward was a serious prince, according to the notions of the age, and much given to relic-worship. He chose a spot sacred by its uses, and by the presence of his own household gods, for the reception of the great relic—the achievement of his sword and spear. It was in the chapel built by his father, containing the shrine of Edward the Confessor—where his loved Queen Eleanor and his father were buried, and where he then desired that his own dust should be laid. He intended at once to enclose the relic in a shrine, which should be the coronation chair of the kings. At first he gave orders for a chair of bronze, then altered his intention, and had it made of wood. Its cover or shrine thus being a seat or throne, altered and adorned from age to age, became the coronation chair of the kings of England."

Would Jacob in his wildest dreams ever have thought of his anointed Bethel stone becoming the sacred relic of the British Empire?

II. *Wrestling Jacob.* Great is the contrast between Jacob at Bethel and Jacob at Peniel. In both cases we may be assured the vision he saw and the encounter with God was in the realm of prayer. For true prayer is a ladder to heaven with two-way traffic; but it is also a wrestling-place with God. And strange to say, that even as the "Stone of Destiny" leads us back to Jacob's ladder, so the end of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel brings us back to his injured thigh and the sinew which became taboo to the Israelites (Gen. 32:32). When I visited the small colony of Jews in Kaifung, China, in 1917, I was astonished to

learn that the Chinese character for Jew was "pluck-out-sinew-folk." So for all these centuries and even in central China the closing verse of the story of Peniel found corroboration. "Therefore, the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank."

What a wonderful story it is! "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." The whole of the thirty-second chapter deals with Jacob after he left Laban and was on his way to meet his estranged brother, Esau. He had again a vision of angels and called the place Mahanaim—i.e., two hosts, two camps; that of Jacob with his large family and flocks and the angels that camped round about him. But his faith was weak and his heart failed him, so he planned by strategy to win Esau's favor who came like a warrior with four hundred followers. He divided his small company (vv. 7–8); he humbled his heart, praying God for mercy and deliverance. "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him lest he come and smite me and the mother with the children." And he also realized his great loneliness as he recalled the past. "I am not worthy of all thy mercies . . . with my staff I passed over this Jordan and now I am become two bands."

And then, after he had distributed among his company the generous peace-offering for a present to Esau, we read: "And Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Hosea, in later days, spoke of Jacob as wrestler from his birth: "In the womb he took his brother by the heel and in his manhood had power with God. Yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him: He found him at Bethel and there He spake with

us, even Jehovah the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial name" (Hos. 12:3, 4).

It was Jacob's encounter with God—God in the form of an angel; wrestling and finding his weakness and his strength at the same time. "What is thy name?" . . . "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He was the type of all those who wrestle in prayer with God, of those who in loneliness and at their own wits end, find God sufficient. As Christina Rossetti says:

"Weeping we hold Him fast who wept
For us. We hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us at the last."

The place where Jacob wrestled is perhaps one of the loneliest and weirdest corners of that land of surprises, Palestine. An orientalist and geographer, Nelson Glueck, describes a night he spent there alone, and his meditations.

"Twenty years had elapsed since Jacob had seen Esau and now his face turned homeward. . . . I have slept out overnight on Tell edh-Dhahab (the "Hill of Gold"), which is probably to be identified with Penuel. The canyon walls widen out considerably at this point, as the hills, through which the Jabbok cuts its way, begin to tumble down toward their meeting place with the Jordan Valley. The rushing little stream bends around the base of this hill on three sides, and in flood season cuts it off altogether from the mainland, as if to say, 'This is a particularly important place, not to be associated with the ordinary mundane world.' From the top of the hill there is a good view over the Jordan Valley and across it to the hills of Palestine. Some sense of sanctity still hovers over this place. My Arab companions were very loathe to have me sleep there alone, but would on no condition accompany me there to spend the night. They made their camp at the foot of the hill, warning me that if I persisted in my intention to sleep on top of it, a spirit (*jinni*) would seize

me during the night, and that if indeed I did survive the ordeal I would wake up in the morning *majnun*, that is, possessed by the spirit. But here Jacob had wrestled during the night with his Adversary, being left alone only at the break of dawn. And here I would sleep or sit out the night, with the living past breathing its vivid tale into my ears. What would happen to me before I crossed the Jordan again? What are those sounds? The sighs of Jacob, the accents of Esau? Dawn had come. My Arabs had been shouting to me to come down, concerned for my safety."[5]

But it is not the desolate loneliness of Jacob and of that environment that moves us most deeply. It is the struggle in Jacob's soul—and in our own souls—when we meet God face to face. Only the sublime hymn by Charles Wesley (which, alas, is seldom found in hymnals) gives us the right interpretation. Read it. And then read it again; and pray:

"Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee,
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

"I need not tell Thee who I am,
My misery, or sin declare,
Thyself hast call'd me by my name,
Look on thy hands, and read it there,
But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

"In vain Thou strugglest to get free,
I never will unloose my hold:
Art Thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of thy love unfold;
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

[5] *The River Jordan*, p. 112, 117.

"'Tis all in vain to hold thy tongue,
Or touch the hollow of my thigh:
Though every sinew be unstrung,
Out of my arms Thou shalt not fly;
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

"My strength is gone, my nature dies,
I sink beneath thy weighty hand,
Faint to revive, and fall to rise;
I fall, and yet by faith I stand,
I stand, and will not let Thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

"Yield to me now—for I am weak;
But confident in self-despair:
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
Be conquer'd by my instant prayer,
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me, if thy name is Love.

"'Tis Love, 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me,
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee:
Pure Universal Love Thou art,
To me, to all, thy bowels move,
Thy nature, and thy name is Love."

V

MOSES and SAMSON

V

Moses and Samson

IN THE LIVES of these contrasting characters, as portrayed in Scripture, we see the glory and the tragedy of the sub-conscious mind. There is more sound psychology in these Old Testament stories than in some college text-books. William James used the concept of the "subliminal" or sub-conscious self to suggest the area of human experience in which contact with the Divine may occur.[1] He does not, however, deal with demonic influence on the sub-conscious mind. We are so apt to forget that there are supernatural forces beneath us as well as above us. Modern psychologists might find striking illustrations in the Bible for some of their theories.

In Exodus 34:29 we read: "*Moses knew not* that the skin of his face shone by reason of God speaking with him." And in Judges 16:20 we read: "And Samson awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times and shake myself free. *But he knew not* that the Lord was departed from him." Here are two statements (of unconscious glory and unconscious impotence) in the lives of two men, both consecrated from birth to Jehovah, both distinguished for service to Israel and both recorded as heroes of the faith. "The things written aforetime were written for our learning that we through faith and patience might inherit the promises." No two characters are greater in their contrast or more obviously an example and a warning. The gateways to our sub-conscious mind are open

[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 511 ff.

when we close our eyes in sleep or when we day-dream our desires. As D. L. Moody used to say at Northfield, "Character is what we are in the dark." Or in Bible language, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Moses knew not that his face shone. Samson knew not that the Lord was departed from him. Yet both were men of faith.

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews Moses has seven verses that record his greatness (11:23–28). Only Samson's *name* is mentioned with those of Gideon and Barak, Jeptha and David and Samuel. Yet anonymously his career is put in the record of the unknown heroes at greater length. Who but Samson "stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness was made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens"? (Heb. 11:33–34).

Milton chose Samson for his greatest tragedy, *Samson Agonistes*. But Michelangelo chose Moses for his greatest piece of sculpture in the Church of San Pietro, Rome. When G. T. Watts painted a fresco for the Hall of Justice, Lincoln's Inn, he gave the central place to Moses represented as head and shoulders above all the law-givers of the ages.

Carlyle in one of his letters, after portraying all the obstacles and difficulties of life, says, "all *that* is as the gates of Gaza which a right Samson, duly surveying the strength of them and well considering himself, has to walk off with and carry away on his shoulder!"

Moses and Samson! What a contrast in their strength, vocation, talent, character, destiny and influence on life and literature. Some would say that they had nothing in common, although both had godly parents and were consecrated in infancy. And they do present a marked contrast.

One was the man of brain, learned in all the wisdom of Egypt. The other was the man of brawn, up to all the tricks and sports

of a giant. Moses' life is one long epic; Samson's a brief tragedy. Moses was the man of God; Samson the man of the people. One was an Apollo; the other a Hercules. Moses was legislator, redeemer and leader of his people. His rod wrought miracles by the hand of God and his pen wrote the laws of Israel for all ages.

Samson appears suddenly as a grotesque figure, a solitary individual always waging his conflict against the Philistines alone and generally actuated by personal motives of caprice or humor. Samson died with a prayer for vengeance on his lips; Moses, with a prophecy for Israel. Moses wrote the Pentateuch; Samson gave us a riddle. Moses lived one hundred and twenty years, founded a nation, and his laws remain their legacy for thirty centuries. Samson's brief career ended in a local catastrophe without permanent success or memorial. The Nazarite of Dan, by his exploits, only began to save Israel from the Philistines. Moses, the Levite, was the greatest prophet of Israel and their supreme law-giver. Moses (although he lost his temper and never entered the Land of Promise) "was faithful in all his house"; while Samson betrayed his trust and lost his power.

So different are these two characters! Yet, one thing they had in common—the same faith but not the same faithfulness. It was in the realm of the sub-conscious that victory began and defeat found its origin.

All modern psychology emphasizes the supreme importance of the sub-conscious mind in the formation or the disintegration of character. Here Freud and Jung, Dewey and James agree. Our sub-conscious mind is the indelible and infallible record of our actual and deepest desires. "Out of the heart are the issues of life."

The *unconscious* influence of any man is, therefore, always greater than his *conscious* influence whether for good or evil. This is the glory and the tragedy of everyday life. A mother in her home, a son at college, a pastor in his parish exert a constant

influence and we are unconscious of it most of the time. So it was with Moses and Samson.

I. *Consider first the Beauty of Holiness.* "Moses knew not that his face shone" after he had tarried in God's presence on the Mount for forty days. It all began with Moses' great decision in Egypt. Moses there and then had chosen "rather to be afflicted with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." And then it was that his face began to shine. It was Moses, also, who caught a glimpse of God's glory in the desert of Midian.

"All earth was full of heaven
And every bush afire with God."

Like Isaiah after his vision in the Temple-court or Paul after his vision on the road to Damascus, so life for Moses was never the same after that mountain experience. Once again Moses was called to higher service. Forty days and forty nights on Sinai's top "he neither ate bread nor drank water"—but his soul was satisfied with marrow and fatness in close fellowship with God.

Still discontent, his deepest desire and earnest prayer was, "Show me Thy glory." And when, by God's command, he stood in the cleft of the rock while the Ineffable passed by, he heard Him say: "The Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

Then it was he made haste to bow down to the earth and worshipped. Again his face began to shine with Jehovah's mercy and loving-kindness, and he knew it not! After he went up to the Mount the second time to receive the Tables of the broken Law, his face shone with a persistently heavenly light.

Paul explains it all to us in his Epistle to the Corinthians (II

Cor. 3:7). The ministration of the law, he says, came with such glory that the Children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face. "So," he says, under the New Testament "we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed to the same image from glory to glory even as from the Spirit of God."

No doubt Paul remembered what it was like when he helped to stone Stephen and "all who sat in the council fastening their eyes on him saw his face as it had been the face of an Angel."

Yes, Moses and Isaiah and Ezekiel and Stephen and Paul himself—prophets, apostles, martyrs—men and women of our day in the humblest walks of life who lived in close fellowship with God—their faces shone and they wist it not.

When the sensitive dark plate of our sub-conscious mind is daily exposed to the light of God's Word, or the light of His glory in the face of Jesus, then, after a shorter or longer exposure, O wonder of wonders! the image of God's Son is printed indelibly on our lives and on our faces.

"Walk in the starlight long enough
And the silver will touch your hair,
For the stars will lean from heaven
And be reflected there.

"Talk with the angels long enough
And your very face will shine,
For the peace of God will touch your eyes
With radiance divine.

"Only give God and the angels time
To burnish what once was dim,
And the glory may rest on all of us
For was it not so with him?"

II. Now let us turn to the other, and very dark picture: *The Tragedy of Defeat in Samson, Unconscious of His Lost Power.*

"He wist not that the Lord was departed from him." "I will shake myself free," said Samson.

There is no figure in the Bible or perhaps in all history more pathetic than that of Samson after his fall. The mighty warrior, Samson, the flash of whose eyes had unnerved his enemies, fettered in a Philistine dungeon! Deprived was he of the light of day, set to grind at the mill-stone like a brute beast, and dragged out to be the jest and scorn of his insolent conquerors—going around in a circle like a donkey.

From this tragic chapter Milton got the theme of his *Samson Agonistes*, by some regarded as a greater work of genius than his *Paradise Lost*. Get it down from your book-shelf. It is a glorious commentary on Samson in his blindness by the blind poet. Not only is it an interpretation of Samson's life, but an illumination of his inner character.

Samson, made captive and blind by the cruel Philistines, utters his complaint in Gaza's prison:

> "O wherefore was my birth from heaven foretold
> Twice by an Angel who at last in sight
> Of both my parents, all in flame ascended
> From off the Altar, where an offering burned.
> Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed,
> As if a person separate to God,
> Designed for great exploits; if I must die
> Betrayed, captived, and both my eyes put out,
> Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
> To grind in brazen fetters under task
> With this Heaven-gifted strength?"

Eyeless in Gaza he asks himself how he lost his power. And when his parents and friends visit him in his desolation he confesses:

> "Ye see, O friends,
> How many evils have enclosed me round
> Yet that which was the worst, now least afflicts me,
> Blindness; for had I sight, confessed with shame
> How could I once look up, or heave the head
> Who like a foolish Pilot have shipwrack't
> My vessel, trusted to me from above
> Gloriously rigged; and for a word, a tear,
> Fool, have divulged the secret gift of God
> To a deceitful woman."[2]

F. M. Krouse, in his monograph on Milton's *Samson*, points out that we can not understand its theme nor its many allusions unless we realize that it is based on the Biblical narrative *as interpreted by the Christian tradition to which Milton was heir*. "Samson stands for more than the victorious Nazarite, the faithful champion of God. He brings to the full circle that immense story which Milton took up in *Paradise Lost* and continued in *Paradise Regained*" (p. 132). Adam was tempted in Eden and fell. Christ was tempted in the desert and was victorious. Samson's real grandeur is interpreted in the epistle to the Hebrews. He is one of the heroes of the Faith. To the early Bible commentators he was even a type of Christ. It was this background of sixteenth and seventeenth century interpretation that made John Donne refer to the brawling warrior of Dan as a saint (*Biathanatos* III, v. 4). The climax of *Samson Agonistes* is that he, blind and defeated, agonizes against his last temptation at Gaza and by faith and prayer obtains the victory. "The *agon* against evil and its temptations in whatever form is Man's vocation. And in a state of grace he can be confident of ultimate triumph" (p. 133). That is why the final chorus of the *Tragedy*, read in the light of the Christian tradition of Milton's day and his own simple faith, justifies Samson's name on the walls of the Westminster Abbey in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

How did Samson lose his power? It was the age of brute

[2] *Samson Agonistes*, Lines 23–36 and 193–202.
Cf. *Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition* by F. M. Krouse, Princeton, N.J. 1949. A masterly exposition of the poem.

force, and to deliver Israel God raised up a physical giant. His strength was entirely dependent on obedience to God and his Nazarite vow. But his very strength proved his undoing. His strength was not as the strength of ten because his heart did not remain pure. Pride and sensual pleasure led to his fall. It was a gradual slipping down along the road that Solomon calls the way of death. Delilah's hands were not the first unholy hands to toy with his long locks. Step by step he went down that road because he held the honor of God cheaper than his own pleasure.

Samson is the type of all such who, knowing God, slide backward into denying Him. "Many shall say in that day, Have we not prophesied in Thy name and worked miracles and cast out demons? And He will say, I never knew you; depart from me." The tree, rotten at the core, may grace your lawn until a sudden storm strikes it down. The house you built without foundation may look pretty until—the rain descends and the floods carry it away. "I will shake myself," said Samson, "as at other times; but he wist not that God had departed from him."

The strength of his will did not depend on the length of his locks but on loyalty to God and his vocation. Like Esau, Samson sold his birthright; his courage was broken by self-indulgence. He sold his secret to an alien woman. Delilah betrayed Samson as Judas did Christ, with a kiss. The road upward to glory and downward to shame and contempt is by gradual stages. Sow an act, you reap a habit; sow a habit, you reap a destiny.

Read the story of Balaam, of Saul the King, of Solomon, of Demas, of Judas Iscariot or of Archippus, pastor of the Laodicean Church (Col. 4:14–17; Rev. 3:14) and in each case they seemed unconscious, before their fall, that God had departed from them. That is the tragedy of the sub-conscious. Paul puts it, "who being past feeling have given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness."

There are those like Samson who have lost their first love and their spiritual power; who have neglected prayer and become gradually impotent; whose faith grew weaker as their Bible study was omitted. Such Christians have a name to live but are dead. They may say, "I will shake myself, I will be a real person" —but God's spirit is not invoked that way.

When a man crucifies his ideals, turns his back on God's appeal, sacrifices Christian principles at the shrine of expediency or compromises truth, he follows Samson's downward path. If he dallies with the world or falls in love with money, then his Nazarene locks are shorn like those of Samson.

Which shall it be, Moses or Samson? Are you being transformed daily into the image of Christ, always looking toward Him? Are men conscious of heavenly beauties in your character of which you yourself are utterly unconscious? "Now the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness. . . ." —ever more fruit. And there is the terrible alternative: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned."

Nevertheless, there was hope even for Samson. As Paul said: "He can graft them in again." God restored Samson in his Gaza prison. Samson prayed. He repented. His locks began to grow again and his strength was restored. He learned what repentance is when he leaned against the pillars of Dagon's temple. Around him were three thousand enemies of Israel, men and women, mocking him and his God. "And Samson called unto Jehovah, I pray Thee, O Lord, remember me and strengthen me only this once. . . . let me die with the Philistines." What a tragic yet heroic end to a tragic life! "So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life." Samson's name is recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews; and, we believe, also in heaven. "By faith, Samson."

Thanks to God's mercy and loving-kindness there is hope for those who stumble, even at the end of the road. Froude, the historian, in describing the tragic martyrdom of Archbishop Cranmer in 1556, compares his end to that of Samson. Bishop Ridley and Bishop Latimer were confined with him in the Tower of London and all expected death on the charge of heresy. They were removed to Oxford for a second trial. There Ridley and Latimer were unflinching and were burned at the stake on October 18, 1555. But Cranmer recanted. The effect in favor of the Romish church was enormous and immediate. However, when he was led out to martyrdom, he surprised everyone by renouncing his recantations and because written by his right hand he thrust that betraying hand first into the fire and held it there as witness, in a repentance not to be repented of. "So perished Cranmer. He was brought out, with the eyes of his soul blinded, to make sport for his enemies, and in his death he brought upon them a wider destruction than he had effected by his teaching while alive. Pole was appointed the next day to the See of Canterbury; but in other respects the Court had over-reached themselves by their cruelty. Had they been content to accept the recantation, they would have left the Archbishop to die broken-hearted, pointed at by the finger of pitying scorn, and the Reformation would have been disgraced in its champion."

O Thou who dwellest in light inaccessible and full of glory, show us Thy glory in the common-place. May every bush be afire with God and our faces shine in the face of Thine Anointed. When self-confidence makes us stumble and we fall, restore us. Make Thy strength perfect in our weakness for Thine own name's sake. Amen.

VI

NOAH, DANIEL and JOB: Three Righteous Men

VI

Noah, Daniel and Job: Three Righteous Men

THERE IS a strange text on intercessory prayer in the prophecy of Ezekiel. It links together three men in strange order and the words are repeated three times in the same chapter (14:14,16,20). "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God."

The chapter tells of God's day of doom for unrepentant Israel. So grievous was their sin that their very land was defiled and God threatened to "break the staff of the bread thereof" and to "send famine upon it," and "cut off man and beast from it." There was no hope of intercession left. And then Ezekiel, inspired of God, chooses from the long record of divine history three men, righteous men who would not even by their presence or by their prayers be able to redeem Israel from its impending doom. What a strange choice—Noah, Daniel, and Job!

Noah, who survived the flood but could not stay it; who walked with God and yet fell into grievous sin! Daniel, the greatly beloved prophet of the exile who preached to Nebuchadnezzar but could not prevent the destruction of Babylon! Job, an example of patience who sinned not in his words, who prayed for his friends and offered sacrifice, yet could not solve the problem of the righteous man doomed to suffer!

This verse (of triplet heroes who lived ages apart) has been a puzzle and bewilderment to the critics who have tried to make the middle link a missing link and Daniel a mythical figure.

Noah is lost in antediluvian mists because of the flood story and the big ark, while Job was a fictional figure, the hero of an old poem! It is they who tell us, in the Encyclopedia Britannica, "The book of Daniel is not a record of historical fact but in its first half an edifying romance and in its latter half a typical apocalypse written about 200 B.C." "Daniel is known to us only as a character in Jewish fiction" (C. C. Torrey). But the very Daniel who escapes half alive from the critics' den is the same Daniel whose prayer was heard in the lion's den and whose prophecies are quoted by our Saviour as genuine and certain of fulfillment (Matt. 24:15). The book of Daniel is a book of intercession as well as a book of prophecy.

Ezekiel was older than, and yet a contemporary of, Daniel (if we follow the conservative interpretation), but he puts him with antediluvian Noah and with the patriarch Job. The three are linked together as historic characters. Was Daniel already a spiritual celebrity when Ezekiel wrote his prophecy? What had these men in common? Why are they called men of righteousness, examples of perfection? When we begin to ask questions such as these and to *think*, then the Bible unfolds its riches.

There is nothing accidental or grotesque in the association of such names. They are cited as examples of men who, because they were righteous were also mighty in prayer before a righteous and holy God. Even if *such* men pray for others they are not always sure of their own will being in accord with God's purpose. There is an end to intercession, as we have seen, in the prayer of Abraham for Sodom. God's mercy is everlasting but His righteousness and judgment are also part of His very being. There is such a thing even in the New Testament as "the wrath of the Lamb" and the day of final judgment and punishment.

A guest at Luther's table once asked the Doctor whether there was not some discrepancy between the words of Ezekiel in this passage and the saying of the Lord to Abraham in Genesis

18:32, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." Luther replied: "There is no discrepancy. The explanation is that in Ezekiel these men were forbidden to pray, and this was not the case with Abraham. If God says, 'Thou shalt not pray,' one may well cease. . . . I should long ago have given up praying against the Turk if I had had a command; but since I have not got it, I must go on praying." So we must continue to pray for Israel today.

There is no reference by Ezekiel to Abraham nor to Moses, the great intercessors. He goes further afield and speaks of Noah who found favor with God (Gen. 6:8); who was a righteous man (Gen. 7:1); who walked with God and was perfect in his generation (Heb. 11:7); who was, however, conscious of his sin when he built an altar and received the rainbow of promise; the same rainbow that is round about the throne of God and the Lamb. By faith, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, he prepared an ark, condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness according to faith. He saw the destruction of a whole generation by the flood. He walked with God (although he stumbled into sin) and his name is forever enrolled in the New Testament as a hero of faith.

The significance of the rainbow which God spanned over Noah's altar of prayer as a perpetual promise (Gen. 9:13) is lost unless we put ourselves back to the age of the patriarchs. As Henry Vaughan puts it:

> "How bright wert thou, when Shem's admiring eye
> Thy burnisht, flaming Arch did first descry!
> When Terah, Nahor, Haran, Abram, Lot,
> The youthful world's grey fathers in one knot,
> Did with intentive looks watch every hour
> For thy new light, and trembled at each shower!"[1]

[1]Stoddard, *The Old Testament in Life and Literature*, p. 44.

The rainbow is a constant reminder of Noah as a man of prayer!

Daniel is called the "greatly beloved" by God Himself (9:23; 10:11,19). He was a man of vision and of dauntless courage who dared to stand alone. He had purpose firm and prayed three times daily on his knees, toward the Holy City, when in exile. Tennyson wrote to one of his friends: "Pusey's 'Daniel the Prophet' disposes of the rickety and crotchety arguments of those who vainly thought they had found a fulcrum whereby to upheave all prophecy and miracle. It is a noble book from its learning and its logic. It is reading round about a subject and not the subject itself which damages the intellect so much."[2]

Matthew Henry says that Ezekiel chose Daniel as the link between Noah and Job "to teach us not to lessen the useful good men of our day by overmagnifying the ancients. Let the children of the captivity know that Daniel, their neighbor, and companion in tribulation, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had."

The third righteous man was Job, a perfect man and upright, one that feared God and turned away from evil (Job 1:1,8; 42:8,9); a rich man who became very unhappy; a very lonely man who, deserted by his friends and his own wife, kept his faith and cried, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

The order of the names is not chronological nor intended to teach history—Noah, Daniel, Job. But it teaches the deeper lesson of answered and unanswered prayer. They point out the limits of the realm of intercession. The glorious climax of the book of Job is answered prayer. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. . . . So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. . . . So Job died, being old and full of years" (Job 42:10,12,17).

[2] *Tennyson and his Friends*, p. 64.

All three of these men Ezekiel calls "righteous" in the Old Testament sense. It was in every case, as Paul tells us, a righteousness of faith. They believed God and it was counted unto them for righteousness; they confessed their own sinfulness and unworthiness. In the words of the gospel, "they saw Christ's day and were glad." They were saved by faith.

Each interceded for others and faced the problem of "the moral man in immoral society" long before Reinhold Niebuhr tried his solution. In the Old Testament, suffering is a problem; in the New Testament, Paul and others speak of it as a privilege.

Even the Israel of Ezekiel's day found mercy at the last. The remnant was saved and God's covenant promise for them still stands and is finding its fulfillment in Palestine.

Finally, each of these three men spoke by word and deed of the Great Deliverer. Noah's ark is a type of Christ and the Church. Noah's prophecy (Gen. 9:26,27) points to Shem as the line of promise for the future Redeemer. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." What an epitome of history in a sentence!

Job's longing for a Daysman to judge his cause and his triumphant cry, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," has been immortalized in Handel's Messiah and will be sung down the ages on Easter Day in spite of all efforts to emasculate its meaning by criticism of the text.

And who can read the glorious promises in the last chapter of Daniel without a thrill for the general Resurrection and the Great Day of reward.

These three men individually are examples to believers to the end of time. Noah for his strong faith, Daniel for his dauntless courage and Job for patience in suffering. Take one example from Thomas Carlyle's *Letters*. After the death of Emerson's

little son, we are told that the Scottish philosopher wrote to his American friend:

"What can we say in these cases? There is nothing to be said—nothing but what the wild son of Ishmael, and every thinking heart, from of old have learned to say: God is great! He is terrible and stern; but we know also He is good. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Your bright little boy, chief of your possessions here below, is wrapt away from you; but of very truth *he* is with God, even as we that yet live are—and surely in the way that was *best* for him, and for you, and for all of us."

In this way Job's tears are our legacy of joy and his faith cheers Carlyle and Handel and all of us.

"In the hour of trial
Jesus pray for me,
Lest by base denial
I depart from Thee.
"When Thou seest me waver
With a look recall,
Not for fear or favor
Suffer me to fall."

Amen.

VII

DAVID'S Amulet Against Fear

VII

David's Amulet Against Fear
Psalm 91

ON JANUARY 6, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed Congress saying: "Our objectives are clear, namely, establishing and securing freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and *freedom from fear everywhere in the world*." Of these four freedoms, the last-named is most difficult to attain because most universal in its absence. "Fear is the ruling motive of the human race and always has been," said Robert E. Speer. If you doubt the truth of this startling statement, study anthropology or the Bible Concordance. Men everywhere fear the powers of nature, the mysteries of the supernatural, their own consciences, their fellow men and, most of all, death and what lies beyond.

Study the words "fear God" and "fear not" as they occur in the Scriptures and you have an index to God's attitude toward the first-fruit of sin—FEAR. Read the seven hundred and ninety-six references to being afraid and fearing in the Concordance and you will agree that, at least in Scripture, fear is the ruling motive of man. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" because it is the only remedy for all our fears. And "perfect love casts out fear" because Jesus Christ's favorite greeting was "Fear not."

The ninety-first psalm was used from ancient times by Israel as an amulet against disease and pestilence, fire and flood, disaster or sudden death. During the London Plague of 1665 it was

greatly used as a talisman; but aside from such superstition we have a most interesting story from the diary of Daniel Defoe. He was at that time a saddler in Oldsgate and was strongly advised by his brother to join the masses who fled from London, the doomed city.

"In the retirement of the evening," says the saddler, "I endeavoured to resolve first, what it was my duty to do; and I stated the arguments with which my brother had pressed me to go into the country, and I set against them the strong impressions which I had on my mind for staying; the visible call I seemed to have from the particular circumstances of my calling, and the care due from me for the preservation of my effects, which were, as I might say, my estate; also the intimations which I thought I had from Heaven. Add to this, that turning over the Bible which lay before me, and while my thoughts were more than ordinarily serious upon the question, I cried out, 'Well, I know not what to do'; 'Lord, direct me!' and the like; and at that juncture I happened to stop turning over the book, at the ninety-first Psalm, and casting my eye on the second verse, I read on to the seventh verse inclusive, and after that included the tenth.

"I need scarce tell the reader, that from that moment I resolved that I would stay in the town; and casting myself entirely upon the goodness and protection of the Almighty, would not seek any other shelter whatever; and that as my times were in His hands, He was as able to keep me in a Time of Infection as in a Time of Health; and if He did not think fit to deliver me, still I was in His hands, and it was meet He should do with me as should seem good to Him."[1]

This wonderful Psalm has been again and again the comfort of God's people, their confidence in fear and in the hour of danger or death. It was one of the favorites of the Reformers and the Huguenots during the days when Protestanism struggled for its life. They turned it into their stately musical psalmody and sang it like French patriots do the Marseillaise. Even artists were bold enough to turn its imagery into carving. I remember how in 1925 it was my privilege to preach in the Dutch Reformed Church at Capetown. The richly carved rostrum and pulpit in the old church has for its base a lion, an adder, and a dragon artistically entwined; and he who ascends the winding stairs literally treads upon the typical enemies of God's Truth (Ps. 91:13). Such a pulpit is not a coward's throne but a royal seat of authority for the staunch Calvinists who believe in God's sovereignty and remember their glorious history of martyrs for the truth.

[1] Defoe's *Journal*, 1665.

The keynote of the Psalm is courage. "Thou shalt not be afraid" occurs again and again. Dr. Campbell Morgan has pointed out that the perplexing use of pronouns has its solution when we think of the three speakers: God, the believer and his fellow-pilgrim. "There is a change in the use of pronouns from first to second person twice over, and from third to first at the beginning, and from second to third at the close; which, although it has created some sense of difficulty, is yet a key to the psalm for purposes of analysis. Let us set out the scheme of the psalm round these changes, leaving its familiar words to speak for themselves.

> The statement of truth (v. 1).
> Personal affirmation of realization (v. 2).
> The address of the singer, either to his own soul, or to some other person, or to the nation, in which he affirms the convictions resulting from personal realization of the truth (vv. 3–8).
> Repetition of personal realization (v. 9a).
> Same as verses 3–8 (vv. 9b–13).
> Conclusion of psalm, in which the singer with holy boldness expresses as in the words of Jehovah, the safety of the trusting

soul, and thus gives the testimony of God as well as that of man to the truth.[a]

In the Pilgrims' progress from the City of Destruction to the Golden Gate, they are beset by fears within and without: not only Mr. Fearful but Hopeful, not only Ready-to-halt but Christian himself.

Peter was afraid and began to sink (Matt. 14:30). Paul testified "without were fightings, within were fears" (II Cor. 7:5). We read that Adam was afraid when he heard God's voice in the garden; Sarah was afraid when she told a lie; Moses was afraid and hid his face; Saul was afraid of David and David of Saul; Gideon was afraid. God's first word to Hagar, Moses, David, Isaiah and Daniel was "fear not." Angels used the same words to Joseph and Mary; and to Paul in danger of ship-wreck; and to John on lonely Patmos came the same word "Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead and am alive for evermore."

The Talismanic psalm, as a Jewish rabbi remarks, goes round the clock. It speaks of terror by night, of the arrow that flieth by day, of the pestilence that walketh in twilight, and the destruction that wasteth at high-noon.

Who has not felt the terror of darkness? Because they enter the world "trailing clouds of glory," little children are afraid of the dark. And saintly mystics speak of the dark night of the soul. In Dr. Edwin Bevan's Gifford Lectures on *Symbolism and Faith*, he emphasizes the fact that in all religions, light is a symbol of God and darkness of evil.

The psalmist tells us that if we dwell in the secret place of the Most High we shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Darkness and light are both alike to Him who dwelleth in light inaccessible and full of glory. So the four demons that love darkness and dwell in darkness, flee at His presence. They

[a]G. Campbell Morgan, *Notes on the Psalms*, p. 174. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York.

are discouragement, despair, remorse and loneliness. These demons evade you, elude you, attack you, strangle you, spring at you or crouch near you so you can hear their whisperings without recognizing their hideous forms.

> "Christian, dost thou see them on the holy ground
> How the powers of darkness rage thy steps around?"

So sang St. Andrew of Crete (660–732) and we echo the song in the twentieth century in our hymnal. There are faithless Elijahs who have fled from some Jezebel and sit in despair under a juniper-tree. "It is enough, now Lord, take away my life for I am not better than my fathers." Many would-be suicides might have escaped had they taken refuge under the shadow of the Almighty!

Others come to despair by fear of themselves or their task: "I was afraid and hid thy talent in a napkin." Fear is the foe of endeavor. It was remorse that pursued Judas when he threw the thirty pieces of silver back to those who hired him, crying, "I have betrayed innocent blood."

Or do you desire to witness the terror and the night of loneliness? Watch Abraham when "the horror of a great darkness fell upon him," standing guard near the carcasses of his sacrifice (Gen. 15:11–13); Job when he was bade to curse God and die, or when he said, "O that I knew where I might find him"; or John the Baptist in prison where his faith in the Messiah, whom he saw at the Jordan, nearly failed.

In the Pilgrim's Progress the two who had victory over Giant Despair in Doubting Castle, met the "terror by night" in the Valley of the shadow of death. But they took refuge under the shadow of the Almighty and dwelt in the secret place of the Most High.

Some faint-hearted Christians are so pessimistic that they blow out their candles to see how dark it is; others are optimists

and trust that He who lit their candle will not quench the smoking flax-wick but re-kindle its flame.

A man of unbreakable courage was George Hunter, the apostle of Turkestan. For sixty years he preached among Moslems with only one furlough. And then in his old age the Soviet authorities arrested this man as a British spy, subjecting him ruthlessly to a prolonged and hideous torture, devilish in its ingenious subtlety. Sleep was denied him; a flaring electric light burned down upon him constantly; and, if he lifted a blanket between it and his eyes, a warder immediately pulled that down again; he was, night after night, interrogated till his tired mind could hardly think; he was doped to break down his will power. But the folk who hail, as Hunter did, from Scotland are a tough and indomitable breed. And he held out till release came through a turn in the political wheel. But it told even on him. "Do what you can," he wrote, "to make the Church at home understand that this has nothing to do with the severities of normal imprisonment, but is based on profound understanding of demoniacal psychology. Long after you are released you still hear their voices taunting you, and, for longer still, you feel that they are after you, seeking to hurt and destroy you." [8] But his refuge was the secret place of the Most High. And now, released from earth's darkness, he dwells in the place of light.

And more deadly even than the terror by night there is "the arrow that flieth by day." David often uses that word *arrows*, (e.g. Ps. 64: 3), of the attacks on him by foes and traitors. Job and Isaiah also use the word of the hatred of men, of slander and back-biting—the arrows of Satan. They come unseen from some evil hiding place; they come from behind.

David had the arrows of Absalom, Saul, Ahitophel, and Shemei who cursed him as he crossed the brook Kedron. Christ

[8] *George Hunter, Apostle of Turkestan,* by Mildred Cable and Francesca Frence (China Inland Mission).

had the arrows of the Scribes and Pharisees. Paul, those in the Corinthian and Galatian churches as well as those of "false brethren." It was Jesus who said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake." Men shoot arrows with their lips carelessly. To label fellow Christians is often to libel them. Our safest refuge is the Secret Place.

And then there is the "pestilence that walketh in darkness." Thou shalt not be afraid of it in the streets of our great cities or in the loneliness of the world's Vanity Fair where sensuality, greed and evil passions, self-indulgence and frivolity scatter their deadly microbes unseen. "The fleshly lusts," as Paul said, "which war against the soul," spare no man. Joseph walked on the edge of the precipice but held fast to the God of his fathers. David fell over and wrote his repentance in tears of blood. Solomon, in his older years, seems to have lived for a time in the canyon but took pains to write warning for others.

In our present age when Vanity Fair shouts to pilgrims to live as the world lives and sex-appeal spreads its net in advertisement and on the news-stands, who can escape? Only those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I recall days during the first World War when a soldier in Cairo told of his temptations and quoted the lines:

"Fighting alone tonight
With never a stander-by
To cheer me in the fight.
Or hear me when I cry.
Only the Lord can hear,
Only the Lord can know
The struggle within how dark and
drear,
Though quiet the outside be."

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," in the hour of temptation on Piccadilly or Broadway.

David's Talismanic psalm also guards against the insidious "destruction that wasteth at noon-day." The guardian Hand goes all around the clock. From mid-night to the morning, the noon-day and the evening shadows—we can abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Here is a psalm to write on life's sun-dial. It is always appropriate and always fits our need. The noon-day on the clock and the noon-day of life are not free from dangers. The high-noon of success may be the hour when Pride comes, followed by Destruction. And the siesta at noon-day may end as it did for David in sore temptation and fall. Insidious is the arch-enemy of our souls.

Christ's threefold temptation to self-indulgence, to presumption and to pride came after His baptism by the Holy Spirit and the voice from the Father proclaimed Him beloved. It was from this very psahn that the Tempter drew his sharp shaft of doubt. "Cast thyself down. . . . He shall give his angels charge concerning thee . . ." But he omitted part of the Psalm text, "*to keep thee in all thy ways*" (Matt. 4:5,6).

Paul the apostle wrote, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me" (II Cor. 12:7). In the previous chapter (II Cor. 11:33) we read that he was let down over the wall of Damascus in a basket! In this chapter we are told he was caught up to the third heaven and in Paradise heard unspeakable words. So *he* had his ups and downs like all lesser disciples. But God's strength was made perfect in his weakness and he could glory in his infirmities, for the power of Christ rested on him. He poured contempt on all his pride at the Cross; there is no race pride, or pride of position, or self-righteousness, or pride of human wisdom at Calvary.

That was a great call to repentance for all Christians given by D. R. Davies in his exposition of the General Confession, "Down Peacock-Feathers." This is a book for every man and

every minister. He that dwells near the shadow of the Cross shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

How beautiful is the interpretation of this amulet psahn by Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, daughter of an Indian bishop:

"In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.

"When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His wing
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring;
And my Saviour rests beside me, as we hold communion sweet;
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet.

"Only this I know: I tell Him all my doubts and griefs and fears;—
Oh, how patiently He listens! and my drooping soul He cheers:
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false friend He would be,
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see!

"Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow; this shall then be your reward;
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting-place,
You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face."

VIII

JONATHAN: The Friend of DAVID

VIII

Jonathan: The Friend of David

EVERY CHRISTIAN FAMILY that studies the Bible should have a Concordance and a Bible dictionary. These two books are the keys to answer many of the difficulties found in the Book of books, and are greatly helpful, in its study, for our faith and life.

The Concordance enables us to find all the references to any Bible character or all that is said on any particular subject. The Bible dictionary is based on the Concordance and gathers into short compass all the light thrown by geography, ethnology history or theology on the subject treated.

When you open the Concordance you are surprised, first of all, that there are no less than fifteen or sixteen different Jonathans in the Old Testament; that this beautiful Hebrew name occurs ninety-two times—and that only in the Old Testament historical books.

The name signifies *Jehovah's gift*, of which Nathan is the abbreviation and Theodore or Dorothy the Greek equivalents. Jonathan was also the name of the youngest son of the priest, Mattathias, whose brother, Judas Maccabeus, was slain in battle against the Romans in 161 B.C. Every Jewish lad can tell the glorious exploits of this hero who fought for Israel with devotion as fanatic as the Irgun Zionists did so short a time ago (I Maccab. 2:9). The other fourteen Jonathans of the Old Testament are more obscure: a Levite of Bethlehem, an uncle of King David, a son of Abiathar, one of David's mighty

men, an opponent of Ezra, and others—all had the same name.

But Jonathan, Saul's first son, stands out above them all, a friend who loved David at all times and stuck to him closer than a brother. Perhaps he was the true friend to whom Solomon referred in his Proverbs. "A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity" (17:17). "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (18:24). Perhaps Solomon heard the story of Jonathan from his father's or mother's lips.

But why did not a prophet or New Testament writer refer to Jonathan, the great friend of David, as an example of unselfish devotion to man and faith in God? That is hard to answer. The omissions of the Bible record are sometimes as arresting as its statements. Nevertheless, the Bible contains wonderful stories of great friendships from Abraham, the friend of God, and of Eliezer of Damascus, to the friendships of Jesus at Bethany and Paul's great list of friends in Rome (Rom. 16:1–23). One must read that chapter of names, and read between the lines, to grasp the greatness of Paul's loving heart. It reads like a page in a modern Guest Book—and Paul had not yet been to Rome!

But the most wonderful definition of human friendship, and illustration of it, is given in the story of Jonathan, the son of Saul. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David"; and God did the knitting. The warp and woof of two lives became a seamless garment of friendship, celebrated by David in the most touching elegy of Scripture, when he received the news of the tragic death of Saul and Jonathan in battle (II Sam. 1:19–27): "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" Was there ever a royal friendship like this?

No crown prince ever resigned his right to a throne with nobler motive and greater humility and sincerity of heart than Jonathan did to David on that day when they made their covenant (I Sam. 20:1–42). The shooting of arrows was a symbol so deeply moving that we read: "David . . . bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. . . . And Jonathan said, . . . Go in peace, . . . the Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever." David lived up to his promise when he sought out and loved poor lame Mephibosheth (II Sam. 4:4; 9:13) and gave him a place at the king's table.

The strange character of Saul has been described in literature (especially by Robert Browning); of David's sure mercies, his dark sins and deep repentance every one knows. Even as the Psalms reflect many of the experiences of David while shepherd boy and king, and all the deep waters through which he passed as exile before he was restored to his throne,—so we may read between the lines of some of the Psalms his references to friendship. David could never forget his bosom-friend, Jonathan. In the 35th Psalm he pitifully pleads with God against his enemies who rewarded him good for evil, who again and again sought to kill him (vv. 20–23); but at the end he cries, "Let them shout for joy and be glad that favor my righteous cause." In Psalm 38:11, when his lovers and his friends stand aloof and his own family stand afar off, he knew that Jonathan was still close to his heart and cause. Yet Jonathan's name is not mentioned in a single psalm!

Who has written in praise of Jonathan the Greatheart and the friend of both Saul and David? Who has told of his courage in single-handed battle (I Sam. 13:3); his endurance in pursuit of the enemy (I Sam. 14); his filial patience with a father who tried

to murder him (I Sam. 20:33); his secret rendezvous in the wilderness of Ziph when David's hands "were strengthened in God"?

All this story is vividly told only in the book of Samuel. It is an epic worthy of a poet's pen—*Jonathan, The Friend.* The eldest son of Saul seems to have loved obscurity, but he was not a coward. When his father placed one-third of his army at Geba under the command of Jonathan, he smote the Philistian garrison by a courageous adventure. With a few companions he climbed the steep gorge of Michmash and startled the enemy into headlong retreat. Saul had pronounced a curse upon anyone who should eat food during the retreat. Poor Jonathan, ignorant of his father's oath, found some wild honey and ate it. Then obdurate Saul wanted him to die, but the clamor of the peoples' affection saved him. The whole story is told in I Samuel, chapter fourteen.

Jonathan's friendship for David began after this battle and after David's encounter with Goliath. Even when Saul suggested that David was trying to become king and usurping Jonathan's place as crown-prince, the two never lost faith in each other. They held their secret rendezvous again and again. One must read the entire story in chapters eighteen to twenty of I Samuel. Their last meeting was in the woods of Ziph (I Sam. 23:16–18).

It is against the dark background of Saul's jealous hatred and duplicity that this friendship stands out in all its light and love and beauty. No one has ever depicted the psychology of Saul's schizophrenic character like Robert Browning does in his great poem. David enters the royal tent to soothe the maniac monarch with his music; he says,

> "At first I saw nought but the blackness;
> but soon I descried
> A something more black than the
> blackness—the vast, the upright
> Main prop which sustains the
> pavilion: and slow into sight
> Grew a figure against it, gigantic
> and blackest of all.
> Then a sunbeam, that burst
> through the tent-roof
> Showed Saul."[1]

Every incident in the story of Saul and David sheds glory on the unselfish devotion of Jonathan. He loved Saul because he continued filial in his devotion; but he loved David more and sacrificed his very career for the King whom Samuel had anointed in the place of his father.

"Jonathan, the Generous," Dr. George Matheson calls him. "Jonathan then stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword and to his bow and to his girdle (I Sam. 18:4)." "It is a typical statement; it describes the whole trend of his heart. From beginning to end the love of Jonathan for David was a disrobing, a disvestiture. He was stripping himself of a royal garment. He was unarming himself, ungirding himself."[2] It was the Crown-prince of the new kingdom conferring all his own rights on a plebeian friend because he loved him. No wonder their two hearts were knit together. Not even the glamour of a royal throne and the rule over all Israel could produce jealousy in such loyal hearts.

Friendship is the master passion and surpasses the bonds of kinship in its utter devotion. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." David (who knew the love of women) agreed with Montaigne (1533–1592) in his great essay on *Friendship:* that true friendship surpasses all other passions.

[1] Robert Browning, *Saul,* iii.

[2] *Representative Men of the Bible,* Vol. II, p. 187.

"Thy love for me is wonderful, passing the love of women," said David to Jonathan. And Montaigne explains it. "As for comparing it [real friendship] with affection for women, though this is born of our choice, we cannot do it nor can we put it in this class. Its fire I confess is more active, more scorching and more intense. But it is an impetuous and fickle flame; wavering and variable, a fever flame, subject to fits and lulls, that holds us only by one corner. In friendship it is a general and universal warmth, moderate and even, besides, a constant and settled warmth, all gentleness and smoothness, with nothing bitter and stinging about it. Friendship, on the contrary, is enjoyed according as it is desired; it is bred, nourished, and increased only in enjoyment, since it is spiritual, and the soul grows refined by practice."[3]

David would have said of Jonathan what Montaigne goes on to say of his friend Étienne de la Boétie: "For the rest, what we ordinarily call friends and friendships are nothing but acquaintanceships and familiarities formed by some chance or convenience, by means of which our souls are bound to each other. In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because *it* was he, because *it* was I."

When at Gilboa, Saul and Jonathan were both slain and the news came to David, he wrote the beautiful dirge recorded in II Samuel 1:19–27. Here is James Moffatt's version.

The Song of the Bow

"O Judah, to your crying!
O Israel, to your grief and woe!
On your battle-fields the slain are lying,
and heroes, alas! fallen low.

[3] *Selected Essays*, New York, 1943, pp. 59 and 63.

"Tell it not in Gath,
proclaim it not in Ashkelon's streets,
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.

"Dew never fall on you, hills of Gilboa,
Rain never reach you, O death's own field!
For there a hero dropped his shield,
Saul's shield, the armour of the anointed.

"From the blood of the slain,
from the flesh of the mighty,
never did Jonathan's bow turn back,
nor the sword of Saul unsated.

"Saul and Jonathan, loved and lovely,
never divided in life or in death!—
swifter than eagles, stronger than lions!

"Daughters of Israel, wail for Saul,
who decked you in scarlet and jewels,
who adorned your robes with gold!

"Alas for heroes fallen low
in the thick of the fray!

"Jonathan slain on the field of battle,
my heart is sore for you,
O Jonathan, my brother!
You were my dear delight,
your love for me was a wonder, far
beyond a woman's love.

"Alas for heroes fallen low,
for weapons that once felled the foe!"

Such was Jonathan, David's bosom friend in life and death.

No wonder that his name became a legend of friendship and loyalty, and that, at least in Anglo-Saxon circles, the name Jonathan was beloved. Jonathan Edwards in America and Jonathan Swift in England are only two out of many examples of those

who bore the name worthily. Yet, in a sense, *every* American bears the name of Jonathan. In the Revolutionary War, Washington, we are told, used to consult his friend Jonathan Trumbull, Governor of Connecticut, in all his difficulties. "We must ask Brother Jonathan" was so often on his lips that the phrase became synonymous with the good genius of the States and was subsequently applied to Americans generally.

"Brother Jonathan" surely never had a larger opportunity to show world-friendship than he has today and so make the sobriquet appropriate reality.

"Teach us, Good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

—Ignatius Loyola

IX

SOLOMON'S Lonely Heart

IX

Solomon's Lonely Heart

IN THE INTRODUCTION to the King James Version of the English Bible of 1611, there is a very curious and significant reference to Solomon. We give it in its quaint style and spelling:

"Solomon was greater than David, though not in virtue, yet in power; and by his power and wisdome he built a Temple to the Lord, such a one as was the glory of the land of Israel and the wonder of the whole world. But was that his magnificence liked of by all? We doubt of it. Otherwise, why doe they lay it in his sonnes dish, and call unto him for easing of the burden. *Make*, say they, *the grievous servitude of thy father, and his sore yoke lighter*. Belike he had charged them with some levies and troubled them with some cariages; Hereupon they raise up a tragedie, and wish in their heart the Temple had never bene built. So hard a thing it is to please all, even when we please God best, and doe seeke to approve ourselves to every ones conscience."

Solomon's life and writings present us with a portrait of one highly favoured, prosperous, rich and powerful; but of a man with a lonely heart.

"A King dwelt in Jerusalem:
He was the wisest man on earth;
He had all riches from his birth,
And pleasures till he tired of them:
Then, having tested all things, he
Witnessed that all was vanity."[1]

[1]Christina Rossetti, last stanza of *A Testimony*.

It was Solomon who wrote that most intriguing proverb which might be called a key to his own character: "*The heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy.*" (Prov. 14:10). It is a synopsis of his wisdom and a witness to his knowledge of psychology. It can be put by the side of that other saying in Jeremiah: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins (conscience) even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:9,10).

Great men are lonely men; and Solomon, on the testimony of history, was a great man. He is noted for his wisdom and wealth in the Hebrew Scriptures, in the New Testament and in the Koran. So to the followers of the three great theistic faiths his name has become proverbial and Tradition has embroidered its fancies on the ancient records.

Our Saviour spoke of His great ancestor according to the flesh (Matt. 1:7) as celebrated for his wisdom (Matt. 12:42), his glory (Matt. 6:29) and greatness (Luke 11:31). Yet the glory of Solomon could not be compared with the beauty of a lily of the field, and a greater than Solomon walked in Solomon's porch (John 10:23) when He spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd. And it was in that very porch that the Jews took up pieces of broken marble to stone Him (John 10:31) because He said, "I and my Father are one." In the book of Acts, also, the disciples proclaimed the gospel in the porch of Solomon; and Stephen in his defence mentions the name of this great temple-builder (Acts 3:11; 5:12; 7:47). So marvelously the Bible weaves the story of the Old into the New—one Author and one texture.

The Koran of Mohammed makes much of Solomon and six chapters are filled with stories of his wisdom and greatness (*Surahs* 21,27,28,34,37,38). Through this source (largely based

on Jewish legends) the fame of Israel's great monarch and his name have become household words throughout the world of Islam from Morocco to China. Solomon even comes to life in the Arabian Nights again and again.

But the true story of his long reign is found in the books of Kings and Chronicles (I Kings chapters 1–10; II Chron. chapters 1–9). Here is the summary, for we do not attempt a biography but a character sketch. In his life and in his writings Solomon was the man of the lonely heart.

The tenth son of David and the second of Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, Solomon was the third king of Israel. He knew the sad story of Saul and Jonathan and the chequered career of his great father. He was crowned king at Gihon by the direction of his father when aged and infirm; offered sacrifices at Gibeon; chose wisdom in preference to all other things; judged wonderfully between two harlots; increased in power and wealth; had gold in abundance, and weapons of war, a throne of ivory, scientific knowledge of botany, etc.; congratulated by Hiram, king of Tyre, prepared for building the temple, prayed at its dedication, sacrificed on that occasion; God appeared to him, warned him, covenanted with him; he built his own house, and the house of Lebanon for Pharoah's daughter, appointed the courses of the priests, sent ships to Ophir, received the queen of Sheba, gave some cities to Hiram, had numerous wives and concubines, countenanced idolatry, and was threatened for it, opposed by Hadad the Edomite, and by Rezin the Syrian, and by Jeroboam an Ephrathite of Zereda; died, and was buried in the city of David, after a reign of forty years.

One can read the whole story in less than an hour as it is related in Kings and Chronicles. But one must read between the lines to realize what Solomon felt in the midst of all his glory and luxury. His was a schizophrenic mind. He loved and served the God of his father David. He doubtless knew many of His

psalms. But from his earliest youth he must also have known the tragedy that broke David's heart and home and caused the death of his own baby brother. He must have had a passionate nature. The poet recalls the magnificence of his palanquin, his escort and his extensive harem (Song of Sol. 3:6–11).

He was an Oriental monarch in his home life (I Kings 11:3) although political reasons, as in the case of Mohammed, may have prompted his many marriages. This laxity is condemned in the record without question but it provoked him to share in idolatry. Two prayers of Solomon are given as a key to his character. His prayer for divine wisdom (I Kings 3:7ff) proves his humility. And his prayer at the dedication of the temple (I Kings 8) is recognized as "one of the grandest devotional utterances to be found in pre-Christian devotional literature." It is really a prayer of four dimensions. It has length, breadth, depth and height. Here are brief selections from the longest prayer in the Bible that show his "largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the sea-shore" (I Kings 4:29). But there is also sadness of heart—the loneliness of leadership (I Kings 8:22–53). "And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day" (I Kings 8:22,23,24). "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

"What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the

plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;). . . . Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name."

Again and again in this royal and priestly prayer Solomon pleads for the sake of "thy servant David my father" that God will forgive His people. Can we not use our imagination and ask whether Bathsheba had told Solomon the story of the death of his baby brother? Or whether David had read the fifty-first psalm with Solomon and told him? Had he not witnessed the hatred and rebellion in David's household and been with him when he fled across Jordan from Absalom the usurper? Solomon ascended the throne at the age of twenty and the events summarized in his life before and after the crowning-day were big with tragedy. Read the story and you will understand Solomon's words: "The heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy" (Prov. 14:10).

Here was a king who inherited his father's love and his kingdom, increased its boundaries by his sagacity; made commerce to flourish by extensive voyages of his ships to Ophir and India (I Kings 10:22,23); a man noted for his literary pursuits and scientific curiosity "from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to

the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; who spake also of beasts and birds and creeping things and fishes" (I Kings 4:32). The splendour of his court, the magnificence of his table, his pomp and wealth became proverbial; distinguished men and women came from afar to hear his wisdom and seek his counsel (I Kings 10:1–25); and yet the question he himself raises is that he is an unhappy monarch, a restless soul, and a lonely lover.

Whether we follow the critics and deprive him of the authorship of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs and of most of the Proverbs, or follow the Bible text and ancient tradition which ascribes these and more besides to him as his literary legacy—we have enough to judge his view of life and his dissatisfaction with himself and circumstances. "Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Christina Rossetti has a thirteen stanza poem entitled, *A Testimony*, which interprets Solomon's inmost heart, and we quote one more stanza:

> "I said of laughter: it is vain.
> Of mirth I said: what profits it?
> Therefore I found a book, and writ
> Therein how ease and also pain,
> How health and sickness, every one
> Is vanity beneath the sun."[2]

The Book of Proverbs contains not merely the wisdom of Solomon. It is part of the inspired record and is God's word to us today. A proverb is the wit of one embodying the wisdom of many. This collection of proverbs and epigrams contains germs of New Testament truth; the command to love our enemies is found in the Book of Proverbs although with a different motive. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee."

[2] *Poems of Christina Rossetti*, p. 28.

And we are told of the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Was Solomon thinking of David and Jonathan? Are the warnings against the supreme folly of adultery and the description of the strange woman and her allurements in her latticed window or walking the street, pages from Solomon's diary? Who can read words like these, "Hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother. . . . for I was a son unto my father, tender and beloved in the sight of my mother," without thinking of David and Bathsheba and why he was their choice for the succession? "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." "Yet there is a wisdom not of man," and, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing but the glory of kings is to search out a matter." "The heaven for height and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable." Yet again, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, but whoso walketh wisely shall be delivered."

There are cameo pictures of the disturbed life in the royal harem. Striking similes are piled up to describe a contentious woman. She is like "continual dropping from the roof on a rainy day; to restrain her is like grasping the wind; and to use force is like fighting slippery oil." Four things were too wonderful for Solomon: "The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." Three hundred and seventy-five of these sententious sayings are grouped together in one section and Richard G. Moulton remarks: "It may well happen that proverbs which seem the coldest in the mere reading may glow with wisdom if the reader himself happens to pass into the experience they describe. No special information is given by the familiar saying that the heart knoweth its own bitterness. But those who have had to suffer some pang of disas-

ter have realized how this and other proverbs attain the very perfection of adequacy."[3]

Ecclesiastes, with its pessimistic and ever recurring "vanity of vanities," is also *by* Solomon or *about* "the Preacher, the son of David, King in Jerusalem." Even the critics admit that it portrays the life of the monarch whose heart was heavy and sad in the midst of pleasure and plenty. We believe his pen wrote it, and that the saddest book of the Old Testament gives us a portrait of Solomon's divided heart. Thackeray closes his great novel, *Vanity Fair*, with the same cry, all is vanity. Omar Khayyám, the Persian poet, too, says that life is only a chequerboard of nights and days where Destiny plays with men as pieces, and one by one lays them back in the closet. Jeremiah's Lamentations, in places, echoes the pessimism of Ecclesiastes. His heart also knew its own bitterness. The hero-prophet and martyr for truth was plunged into such depths of hopeless agony that we stand astonished. Yet he kept his faith in God. Listen to the man of sorrows: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. . . . He hath led me to walk in darkness and not in light. . . . Against me he turneth his hand again and again all the day. . . . Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through."

Christina Rossetti has two short poems with the title, *The heart knoweth its own bitterness.* The first tells of *hidden* grief, the second of a poignant *open* grief too deep to be understood by the nearest and dearest—"who only scratch the surface with a pin" when they "should pierce, nay probe, nay dig within and sound my depth."

Whatever the Song of Songs may be as drama of earthly love or type of the Bride and Bridegroom, we cannot read it as from

[3] *The Modern Reader's Bible:* The Proverbs, p. xviii.

Solomon's pen without seeing there also a commentary on his lonely and discontented heart. "I sleep but my heart waketh" (Song of Sol. 5:2), so the bridegroom says and Father Tyrrell comments: "I can only hope that one may in some sense say, *Ego dormio sed cor meum vigilat;* that there is a deep self that never sleeps and never dies; and that He who sees that watchful heart and not merely the slumbering eyes will judge us (as we should judge one another) by what we say and do when we are at our best, not when we are at our worst."[4]

When, in reading the Bible, we step out of the closet of David into the palace-porch of Solomon we must judge both of these men by their best and not by their worst. It was Solomon who learned at last what he wrote: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. . . . The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 3:5; 4:18). He learned by bitter experience to keep his "heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Philosophers, as well as poets, have found delight in the writings ascribed to Solomon. Matthew Arnold wrote in 1877: "I have read my chapter in Proverbs,—what a delicious book! . . . After breakfast I must read Ewald's commentary on the chapter." Thomas Carlyle, commenting on the words, "laughter is mad" (Eccles. 2:2), wrote: "True laughter is as rare as any other truth—the sham of it frequent and delectable, like all other shams. I know nothing more wholesome but it is rarer than Christmas which comes but once a year."[5]

And we may well conclude this brief study of Solomon's lonely heart with his own words: "And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclu-

[4] Jane Stoddard, *The Old Testament in Life and Literature*, p. 375.

[5] *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, Vol. I:350.

sion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:12–13).

We cast our burden on Thee, O Lord, this day, with all the bitterness of our lonely hearts. Amen.

X

ISAIAH Taking Hold of God

X

Isaiah Taking Hold of God

IF THE TRADITION recorded in the history of the wicked king, Manasseh, is true and he sawed Isaiah asunder, we certainly still have the pieces in the twentieth century! Critics tell us that besides Isaiah the son of Amoz (Isa. 1:1) there was a Deutero-Isaiah who wrote Isaiah 40–66; and a Trito-Isaiah who wrote some of the sections of Deutero-Isaiah and also corrected or improved portions of the earlier prophecy. Nobody knows who these triplets were or the names of their parents or their exact residence. You are referred to the books of Edward Köning, S. R. Driver and George Adam Smith for their elaborate reasons regarding their sawing asunder of the text if not the authors. In the Bible it all seems very simple. The Old Testament speaks of *one* Isaiah, the greatest of the greater prophets, first in order and foremost in his portrayal of the Manger and the Cross.

Our Saviour and the Apostles, especially Paul, seem to refer to the same well-known prophet (Matt. 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; 15:7; Mark 7:6; Luke 3:4; 4:17; John 1:23; 12:38,39,41; Acts 8:28; 8:30; 28:25; Rom. 9:27; 9:29; 10:16,20). A careful comparison of all these many references is very strong evidence for unity of authorship in Isaiah's book.

When one reads the various theories of the critics, one is amused more than enlightened. At the end of a long discussion for and against the "three or two" Isaiah theory, one of the critics, for example, remarks: "It should be borne in mind also

that Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah may have been divinely inspired just as much as Isaiah. The later writers of the book may have been pupils of Isaiah's thought and therefore have been identified ideally and spiritually with Isaiah. At any rate there is a unity in The Book of Isaiah which cannot be overlooked." Perhaps the ordinary reader and believer would never have seen anything but unity except for the radical critics!

The September issue of the *Biblical Archaelogist*, published by the American Schools of Oriental Research, gives a most interesting account of the discovery of the ancient scrolls concerning which much has appeared in religious magazines. The discovery was made by wandering bedouin, who chanced upon a cave near the north end of the Dead Sea, high up on the cliffs. The entrance to the cave had partially collapsed, but within some jars along the walls the scrolls were found. The bedouin removed the scrolls and tore off the wrappings. Hoping to get money for them, they took them to the Moslem Sheik in Bethlehem, who sent them on to Jerusalem. The scroll of Isaiah is the only complete manuscript of any book of the Bible from such an early time. The date has been set about 100 B.C. It contains the entire book including the last twenty-seven chapters, the authenticity of which has been so disputed by the critics.

Robert Burns speaks of "Rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire." Coleridge called Isaiah his ideal of the Hebrew prophets and studied him "with unremitting attention and most reverential admiration." One of William Blake's disciples said that "to walk with him was like walking with the prophet Isaiah."[1]

When one writer speaks of Isaiah as the climax of all Old Testament prophecy, another calls him the Evangelist before the New Testament; and when Delitzsch speaks of the chapters on the Servant of Jehovah (52:13–53) "that they look as if written beneath the Cross of Golgotha and illuminated by the

[1]Jane Stoddard, *The Old Testament in Life and Literature*, p. 386.

heavenly brightness that streams from the one hundred and tenth Psalm"; when the poets and artists have ever portrayed Isaiah as *one stately figure* of magnificent literary genius and a prophet who rejoiced to see Christ's day and spake of His glory —then we hesitate in spite of the critics to commit mayhem on Isaiah or his book.[2]

The book begins like sober history: "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (1:1). And again: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple" (6:1). He lived in Jerusalem, was frequently in the temple, and his earlier and later prophecies and visions are linked to the court and the kings of his day.

We are not writing of his life and character. Little is said of either. But we limit our pen to a sketch of Isaiah as a man of prayer, especially to the great prayer recorded in Chapters 63:15–64: 1–12.

It is one of the greatest prayer chapters of the Bible and could only have been written by one who saw a vision of God's holiness, his own and Israel's sin and who had seen the coming day of redemption. It is a personal prayer, a poignant prayer, a prayer of deep contrition, ardent faith, and was uttered when "the beautiful house where our fathers praised thee is burned with fire, and all our pleasant places are laid waste" (64:11).

Isaiah seems to have hearkened personally to his own earlier invitation: "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment" (26:20). One must read the whole prayer of eighteen verses, (disregarding the chapter division) to see its beauty and

[2]Sidney Smith, *Isaiah*, Chapters XL–LV, London, 1944. He discusses the whole question of Literary Criticism and History and gives a Bibliography of more than 150 titles.

power. Almost in the middle of it Isaiah gives an incomparable definition of true prayer: It is "To take hold of God," and that is what he does in this prayer, with holy boldness.

There are many definitions of prayer but none so apt, so penetrating, so bold as this brief word. It is Paul who speaks of Isaiah as "very bold" (Rom. 10:20) when he said, "*I was found of them that sought me not.*" It was an act of great daring to speak thus to an exclusive fanatic race like the Jews. Paul, also, as apostle to the gentiles, is very bold when in like manner he cries out: "Is God a God of the Jews only?" The universalism of Paul and of Isaiah both had root in the universalism of God's redeeming love. To understand the prayer as a whole in its depth and breadth and height, we must remember Isaiah's vision in chapter six of God's throne of glory surrounded by "Those flames devout," as Dante says, "which of their six wings make themselves a cowl."

Nor can we forget that back of this prayer was his prophetic vision of the Man of Sorrows with pierced hands; wounded and bruised for our iniquities (Chapter 53). Isaiah prayed under the shadow of the Cross. He saw Christ's coming day and was glad. He saw His glory and spake not only of Him but to Him. His prayer is addressed to the Creator (63:16; 64:8) but also to the Redeemer of Israel (63:8,9).

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRAYER.

Invocation "Look down from heaven and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory" (63:15).

I. His petitions for mercy— Where? Why? How long?
   - A. Where is thy zeal and thy strength?
   - B. Why are thy mercies restrained?
   - C. Art thou not better than Abraham and Israel, Our Father and Our Redeemer?

II. His complaints.
   - A. Why hast thou made us to err?
   - B. Why is our heart so hardened?

   - C. Return and save us from our foes.
   - D. We are called by thy name. Thou art our Father.

III. His boldness in pleading.
   - A. Do not only "look down" but "come down." Rend the heavens (64:1).
   - B. Remember Sinai's wonders and Elijah on Carmel (64:2–5).
   - C. He pleads God's exceeding great promises (4–5).
   - D. He acknowledges his sin and Israel's prayerlessness (vv. 6–7). No one takes hold of God.
   - E. Thou are the Potter, we are the clay (8–9).
   - F. He pleads for the sake of Jerusalem and God's holy temple.

What Alexander R. Gordon says of the whole of Isaiah is true of this his one great prayer: "The Book of Isaiah is the crowning glory of prophecy. As literature it stands supreme, being distinguished alike for majesty of thought, brilliance of imagination, and elevation of style and diction. Its religious quality is conspicuous. In no other prophetic book have we so many rays of heavenly light; in no other are we pointed so clearly forward to the perfect day."[8]

Matthew Henry calls the remarkable prayer, "The Lamentations of Isaiah," and designates it as a "most affectionate, importunate and pleading prayer." Why? It is the psychology of the prayer that arrests attention when we study it. Isaiah surpasses all others in his effort to *define* prayer. And he does it in one short sentence, "*To take hold of God.*"

There are many definitions of prayer. James Montgomery crowds fourteen into a single hymn of six stanzas. Prayer is the soul's sincere desire; prayer is often inaudible; prayer is hidden fire; prayer is a sigh, a tear; prayer is the upward glance to God; prayer is simple as the lisp of a child; prayer is sublime as God's majesty; it is the cry of the prodigal, the breath of the soul, the mountain-air that invigorates, the watchword at death, the key

[8] *The Faith of Isaiah: Statesman and Evangelist*, London, 1919.

to heaven and the pathway of our Saviour. To meditate on these definitions alone would lead us into all the wealth of the Scriptures on prayer.

George Herbert, the saintly poet who died in 1633, has some quaint lines that indicate other and unusual aspects of prayer; he writes in epigrammatic phrases fit to stir our sluggish imagination, if we take time to fathom their depth:

"Prayer—the Churche's banquet, Angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;

"Engine against th' Almightie, sinner's towre,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-daies-world transposing in an houre,
A kind of tune which all things heare and fear."

In the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah (one of the five great chapters on prayer in the Bible) we have a definition of prayer that surpasses all others in its boldness, simplicity and psychological accuracy.

After saying that "men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen . . . what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him," the Prophet confesses his own sins and those of his people. "Our righteousnesses," he says, "are as filthy rags." Then follows Isaiah's definition of prayer in the seventh verse: "*There is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee.*" It is a bold definition. Literally (in the Hebrew text) he says that prayer means to rouse oneself out of sleep and seize hold of Jehovah. Of course, it is not a carnal touch like that of the heathen who embrace their idols or beat them to obtain their answers. Yet we have here the pathos of a suppliant who is in deadly earnest; the arms, the hands, the very fingers of the soul reaching out to lay hold of God; man's personal, spiritual appropriation of deity!

No wonder Paul calls Isaiah very bold! The human soul is poor and needy, yet can take hold of the infinite and eternal Spirit.

"Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and spirit with
spirit may meet.
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands
and feet."

This is the psychology of true prayer—the outreach, the communion and union of the whole soul with God as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the ladder of Jacob by which we climb to God. Anything less than this is not real Christian prayer. Prayer is not only "the highest exercise of the human intellect" as William E. Gladstone said; but it is also the highest exercise of the affections, the will, the memory, the imagination and the conscience. All the powers of the human soul find an adequate field of action *only* in prayer. The person who never prays is literally godless. He who does pray is godly in proportion to his inner prayer-life. This is true in all theistic religions, but supremely true in the Christian faith.

I. First of all, we must take hold of God with our thoughts. The things which the angels "*desire to look into*" we may contemplate on our knees. "*Wherefore*," as Peter tells us, we must "gird up the loins of our mind," and on our knees study to know God with all our mind; not nature, which is His garment; nor man only, although made in His image; nor the saints who are only His servants; but God Himself. By the exercise of our intellects, illuminated by His Spirit, we must strive to understand His being and attributes; to adore Him for our creation and preservation and His daily providence. This is what David said, for example, in the one hundred fourth Psalm: "O God, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with majesty as with a garment." Many chapters in the Book of Isaiah (especially

chapter 40) and many of the nature Psalms consist almost entirely of this intellectual adoration of God.

Our mind also takes hold of God when we remember His goodness. Thanksgiving is the exercise of our memory in the presence of the source of all blessings. Our imaginations are kindled when we contemplate the marvels of creation; the ocean of the fullness of His love; the firmament of His glory; and the exceeding greatness of His power. When we think of these things we shall regain the lost art of meditation. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." Lean souls may be restored to health and vigor by the exercise of this lost art. How little time we really give to this element in prayer!

II. The psychology of prayer also includes taking hold of God with our emotions, our passions and our deepest feelings. We find them all in the prayers of David—awe, fear, sorrow, joy, love, hatred, jealousy, passion. All these emotions, exercised in the right way, find their place in secret prayer. Here they need not be stifled. The only cure for hypocrisy is to lay hold of the source of all sincerity—secret prayer. This is what David meant when he said, "*Pour out* your heart before him." The scum, and the dregs! Paul makes reference in his Epistles once and again to his tears. It is worth while to look up the references.

In his *Private Devotions,* Bishop Lancelot Andrewes has a remarkable prayer for tears:

"Give tears, O God, give a fountain of waters to my head. Give me the grace of tears. Bedew the dryness of my desert heart. Give me tears such as Thou didst give David of old, or Jeremiah, or Peter, or Magdalene. . . . Give me tears which Thou mayest put into Thy bottle and write into Thy book. . . ."

In the confession of sin, daily and detailed, this element of prayer comes to its own. Not without reason does *The Book of Common Prayer* begin with a great confession. Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and Bishop Andrewes' *Private Devotions* are two books in which every page seems wet with tears. Both men were giants in prayer.

III. But prayer is even more than this. It is indeed the highest exercise of the intellect and the noblest use of the emotions, but it is also the largest arena for the use of the will. This power of contrary choice God has given us. It is not merely subjective and submissive, but objective and active. The will of God is not only a pillow on which we may rest our weary souls, but a power-house to give us strength for service. The will of a Christian in prayer is far-reaching because it is heavenly in its origin and earthly in its potentiality. When Daniel prayed, archangels were set in motion. True prayer sets in motion divine forces (and restrains evil forces) in a way we shall never understand until we stand in the Kingdom of Light.

True prayer will achieve just as much as it costs us. It is the little further that costs; it is the little further that counts. "He went a little further and prayed the same words." Gethsemane. Gabbatha. Golgotha. The Resurrection morning.

The ministry of intercession is a great battlefield. We need the whole armor of God, for we wrestle in the trenches against all the powers of darkness. On our knees we are kings and priests in God's universe. Napoleon or Alexander never had such an empire. George Muller and Hudson Taylor were ambassadors plenipotentiary of their King.

The inner chamber into which we retire for daily prayer is the gymnasium of the soul. Dr. Karl Heim, of the University of Tübingen, in his book, *The New Divine Order,* has the following remarkable statement regarding prayer:

"It is part of the essence of prayer to have the certainty that

the whole of world-history, from the solar orbits to the oscillations of the electrons, lies in this moment in the hand of God like soft clay in the hand of the potter. He can make of it what He wills. No sparrow falls from the roof without His will. Miracle is the victory of God in the strife of spiritual powers. Everyone who prays knows that this victory is possible at any moment and in any situation."

We must bear all this in mind if we would understand the true nature of prayer: its psychological elements and the arena in which true prayer becomes effectual because it is fervent. We need to read and ponder this prayer of Isaiah and study all his book as a school of prayer. Isaiah could take hold of God because God had taken hold of Isaiah. "Here am I, send me."

O Thou that hearest prayer, we come to Thee because we can go to none else beside Thee. We take hold of Thee with mind and heart and will. Thou O Christ art all we want. More than all in Thee we find. Amen.

XI

MANASSEH: Adam's Bad Boy

XI

Manasseh: Adam's Bad Boy

"MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord like unto the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel" (II Chron. 33:1). So begins the record of a bad son of a good father, Hezekiah. Manasseh was the most wicked, most idolatrous, most ungodly of all the kings of Israel; nay, of all the characters portrayed in the gallery of the Old Testament.

And the astonishing fact is that this boy who was crowned as king at the age of twelve had a good father and a good mother, and at that time Isaiah the prophet was Court-preacher!

Hezekiah, the successor of the weak king Ahaz, came to the throne as a true patriot and reformer. He was a Puritan and an iconoclast in his hatred of idolatry. Not only did he cleanse the land of all its local shrines to pagan gods but he even "broke in pieces the brazen serpent which Moses had made" and which had become an object of worship. He cleansed the Temple, reformed the priesthood, offered great sin-offerings for the people and held a Passover at which "six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep were sacrificed" (II Chron. 29:32). "So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order and Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people."

It was after this great reformation that the King proclaimed a fast and sanctified the people. They offered willingly and

abundantly in proof of their repentance. The record of Hezekiah is that "in every work that he began in the service of the house of the Lord . . . and in the law and in the commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered." Such was *Hezekiah* (Jehovah is my strength) the father of Manasseh, and his mother's name was *Hephzibah* (my delight is in her). When the crown-prince was born they named him, *Manasseh* (forgotten)—that was the name of Joseph's first-born in Egypt, "for, said he, God made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."

We do not know why good King Hezekiah, and his wife with the beautiful name of Hephzibah, named their son Manasseh, "forgotten." But to many readers of the Bible, Manasseh is a forgotten name and his long reign of fifty-five years (fourteen terms of our Presidents) is an unknown story. Yet he was in many respects the most remarkable of all the kings of Judah.

At the age of twelve he began to reign and the record is one of increasing wickedness, rebellion against God and the undoing of all the reformations made by his father Hezekiah. The story of his abominations and his apostasy from Jehovah is narrated in Kings and repeated in Chronicles. But the earlier record takes no note of his repentance and restoration. Manasseh, like David and Saul of Tarsus, greatly sinned but also greatly repented. And, as Paul tells us, "the things written aforetime were written for our instruction, that we through faith and patience might inherit the promises."

Consider first his long career of wickedness. We read that it was from his early youth up, against his father's example and noble efforts of reform, that the young prince began to sin. He must have had at least one wise counselor and warner. Manasseh lived at the court in the days of Isaiah the prophet. Read the first chapter of that prophecy to see the environment of

Manasseh: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Isa. 1:2–4). "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats" (Isa. 1:10–12).

Besides the voice of the Prophet, Manasseh had the prayers of his parents and their godly example. Although only a lad during his father's fatal illness, he knew how the word of Jehovah came to that father and saved his kingdom from the invasion of the Assyrian. Yet here is the record of his mis-doing, the awful particulars of his sin against God and man:

"He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, after the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah [sex-worship] as did Ahab, king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars to them in the House of Jehovah, whereof Jehovah said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah. And he made his son to pass through the fire and practised augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke Him to anger. And he

set the graven image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which Jehovah said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever: . . . Because Manasseh, king of Judah, hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, that were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols; therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. And I will cast off the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." What a record!

There is an old Tradition given by Josephus, that Manasseh, when he shed innocent blood, also killed Isaiah the prophet by sawing him in twain. The reference in Hebrews, 11th chapter, "they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword," is said to be to Isaiah. This tradition is based upon an apocryphal book, The Ascension of Isaiah (5:11).

The sins of Manasseh sprang from his idolatry. The foolish young prince, in spite of his father's good example, abandoned himself to all the impiety and sensuality of Moloch-worship and putting up shrines to Baal. These Baals were no mere creations of idle speculation. They were symbols of the powers of reproductivity. Therefore, their worship (like that of the old Canaanites) not only legalized but promoted sensual indulgence, especially when the cult of the female symbol Ashtoreth,

added its peculiar seductiveness. Hosea the prophet describes the nature of this worship and how it grieved Jehovah, in the second chapter of his prophecy: "Their mother hath played the harlot, she that conceived them hath done shamefully. For she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. . . . And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers and none shall deliver her out of my hand. . . . And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgat me, saith the Lord (Hos. 2:5,10,13)." The whole chapter describes with wonderful power and pathos the almost uncontrollable force of the appeal of this nature-worship on Israel. Symbols of vice became objects of worship and in their sexual frenzy they offered up little children to the god by fire-sacrifice. That this should be done in Jerusalem and images of Baal set up in the holy-places seems incredible. Yet this very thing Manasseh did and taught his people to do, for he offered up his own children to Baal. "He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom" (II Chron. 33:6). No wonder that this gorge, used for such idolatry and infamy, should at a later date have become Gehenna (the valley of Hinnom, or *hell*) (Jer. 2:23; 7:31 ff.; 32:35). The Arabian geographer, Idrisi (1154 A.D.), already uses the name Jehennam (hell) for this wady, and that is its name in our day—a monument to Manasseh's wickedness.

The record does not spare giving the horrible details of cruelty, lust and idolatry. Both Jeremiah's and Isaiah's condemnation of Israel are based on such deeds by God's chosen people. God's indignation is expressed in terrible language: "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, turning it upside down!"

But the mercy of the Lord endureth forever. He remembers His covenant. Perhaps the prayers of Hezekiah and Hephzibah

followed Manasseh in his wayward career like the *Hound of Heaven* in Francis Thompson's poem. The story does not end in sin but in forgiveness. The mercy of God was heard in the message of Isaiah; O Manasseh, Come now and let us reason together. . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. O Manasseh, hear the voice that entreats thee, Turn back to God!

When the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, he fled from his royal throne and hid in the thorn-bushes of the palace-garden. They caught him, bound him with fetters, and carried him captive to Babylon. He fled from God; but God caught up with him.

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after."[1]

The long-delayed prayers of Hezekiah were answered. Hephzibah's mother-love also pursued him like the Hound of Heaven. We read: "He sought the Lord and humbled himself greatly before the Lord of his fathers." He prayed to God and there is a very ancient record of his prayer for pardon in the Apocrypha called,

The Prayer of Manasses.

"O Lord God Almighty . . . Thou hast appointed repentance to me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number

[1] *The Hound of Heaven,* by Francis Thompson.

of the sands of the sea. My trangressions, O Lord, are multiplied, and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of my iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands that I can not lift up mine head, neither have any release: for I have provoked Thy wrath, and done evil before Thee: I did not Thy will, neither have I kept Thy commandments: I have set up abominations and have multiplied offences.

Now, therefore, I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching Thee of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned . . . I humbly beseech Thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me and destroy me not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me forever . . . Amen."

Like David's psalm of penitence, like the cry of the prodigal, like the prayer of the thief on the Cross, Manasseh's heart-broken, bruised, repentant soul found forgiveness and rest. "For the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great mercy. He will not always chide neither will He keep His anger forever. . . ."

No better description of God's search for Adam's bad boy, Manasseh, can be found, outside of the brief Scripture record, than in the last stanza of Thompson's poem:

"How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of my love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Manasseh came back home. His repentance was real. How do we know it? By his life after he returned to his father's faith and his father's God. Restored to his throne, we read the new record on a new white page of his life. "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God. Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel" (II Chron. 33:14–16).

And at the close of his life we read: "So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead" (II Chron. 33:20).

It is not strange that among the greatest saints, as among the greatest sinners who repent, their last words and their lasting words are prayers for forgiveness. Manasseh's Prayer may not be in the canon of Protestant scripture but it is a noble psalm of confession. Read it, and it will remind you as it did me of the great *Hymn to God the Father* by John Donne whose life also had its dark side before he became a great preacher and poet.

"Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?—
When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
For I have more.

"Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sins their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
For I have more.

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine, as he shines now and heretofore:
And having done that, thou hast done:
I fear no more."[2]

Amen.

[2] *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne and the Complete Poetry of William Blake.* New York, 1941. p. 272.

XII

EZEKIEL'S Wheels

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Ezekiel's Wheels

EZEKIEL has been described as the prophet of hope in a dark age. He paints the rainbow around God's throne. He might also be described as the neglected prophet among the readers of the Old Testament. His book is not easy to understand nor is the character of the writer. But it is astonishing to learn that William Blake, the poet and artist, found Ezekiel fascinating. When a child he once ran into the house crying, I have seen the prophet Ezekiel under a tree in the fields! One of his most remarkable engravings is that of Ezekiel at the death of his wife (Ezek. 24:16). The prophet is represented kneeling, with his arms crossed and eyes uplifted in tearless grief; at his side is a solemn mourning figure bowed, with hair sweeping the ground, and in the background the shrouded corpse of Ezekiel's wife. Under the picture is inscribed, "I take away the desire of thine eyes."

Ezekiel, in contrast with Jeremiah, was the tearless prophet but he was equally fearless to proclaim God's day of doom to apostate Israel. Hengstenberg calls him "a spiritual Samson, gigantic by nature and standing alone. He inspires the awe of holiness, and the greatest chapter of his great prophecy is the first." It is of this first chapter and the vision of wheels within wheels that Milton gives a paraphrase in Book VI of Paradise Lost.

"Forth rushed, with whirlwind sound
The chariot of Paternal Deity

Flashing thick flames, wheels within wheels undrawn,
Itself instinct with Spirit but convoyed
By four Cherubic shapes, four Faces each
Had wondrous, as with Stars their bodies all,
And wings were set with Eyes, with Eyes the Wheels
Of Beryl, and careering Fires between;
Over their heads a crystal Firmament
Whereon a Sapphire Throne . . ."*

There is a window in the Cathedral of Chartres in Northern France on which are depicted, somewhat grotesquely, the four Evangelists, each riding pick-a-back upon the shoulders of one of the Old Testament prophets. St. Matthew sits on the back of Jeremiah, St. Mark on Daniel, St. Luke on Isaiah and St. John on Ezekiel. The grotesqueness of this medieval idea conceals a great truth. St. John's Gospel of the Eternal Word and his great Apocalypse indeed ride *into* the New Testament on the back of the magnificent visions and imagination of the prophet Ezekiel!

He writes: "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." "It was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity when Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, felt the hand of Jehovah upon him."

He whom the German poet, Herder, called the Shakespeare of the Hebrews and of whose first chapter Jerome exclaimed, "it is an ocean and labyrinth of Divine mysteries," tells what he saw:

"And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire unfolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst thereof as it were glowing metal, out of the midst of the fire. And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And

*_Paradise Lost_, Book VI, lines 649–658.

this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man; and every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings thus: their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four had also the face of an eagle."

And after describing the four living creatures, these cherubims of glory, he tells of "burning coals of fire like the appearance of torches which went up and down among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning" (v. 14). But there was more:

"Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces thereof. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto a beryl: and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel. When they went, they went in their four directions: they turned not when they went. As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and they four had rims full of eyes round about. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went; thither was the spirit to go: and the wheels were lifted up beside them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."

This astonishing vision of the gyroscopic moving chariot-throne of Jehovah requires a Milton to describe it and one

should read his vivid portrayal of the throne and Him who sits upon it, from whom heaven and earth flee away and Satan who rebelled is cast headlong into the abyss.

We are concerned here with the interpretation of the vision for ourselves and our own day. The key word is this: "*The spirit of the living creature* (or *of life*) *was in the wheels.*" The vision of chapter one is repeated in chapter ten and we have also in the book of Revelation, the fourth chapter, a reflection of it as in a mirror. Wheels and living creatures as the chariot-throne of God Almighty Who sits among the cherubim and rides on the whirlwind!

The symbolism is perhaps partially due to Ezekiel's Babylonian environment. On the ancient monuments of that empire we see winged creatures and grotesque images of power.

It was just after the terrible and sudden fall of Nineveh in 593 B.C. Egypt had been conquered. Israel had been led captive. It was an age of gigantic upheavals. The glory of Assyria was gone; the doom of Tyre was sealed. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel sang the great Recessional of the nations. They warned Israel lest they forget, lest they forget. Thrones were crashing; dynasties tumbling; dominions disappearing. The whole world was in deep unrest. There was confusion and chaos. There was fear and trembling in captive Israel.

But God was present and manifested His very presence and glory to Ezekiel in the land of captivity. "I saw a vision of God." Wheels and living creatures; mechanism and intelligence; law and love; the cosmos and the Creator.

It is easier to interpret the significance of the four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision than the wheels, for we have the history of Church art and the opinion of the Church fathers to guide us. From a very early day the Lion, the Ox, the face of a Man and the Eagle were associated with the fourfold aspect of God's glory in creation and revelation. More specifically they represent in Christian art, the fourfold gospel. Matthew, symbolized by the Lion; Mark, by the Ox; Luke, by the Man; and John, by the Eagle. In the first gospel, Jesus Christ is portrayed as the King, the lion of Judah and His royalty is indicated by the early question, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" Even as in the last chapter, all power is ascribed to Him in heaven and on earth. The Sermon on the Mount is His royal decree and His genealogy is that of royalty.

Mark's gospel portrays Him primarily as Redeemer and sacrifice for sin, and therefore the ox is his symbol. Luke the physician tells of His lowly birth, His humility, and emphasizes His humanity and compassion. His is the Gospel of the Human face in which we see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. It is John who begins with the Eternal Word in the bosom of the Father; who soars like an eagle beyond all earthly horizons and portrays the essential and eternal deity of our Saviour, even in the days of His flesh.

All this is put into marble and on canvas by medieval architects and painters. They have made Ezekiel's symbolism familiar. Who has not seen the lecterns from which the Gospel is read, resting on a bronze eagle with outstretched wings? One fourfold Gospel for the four corners of the earth and the fourfold need of humanity. Like Ezekiel, when we study these records on our knees we may say, "I saw a vision of God."

But what do the whirling wheels of the Chariot of fire signify, around which the living creatures ceaselessly move as guard of honor? "And when they went I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech. . . ." (v. 24). And above the wheels and the living creatures "the likeness of a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of the appearance of a Man" (v. 26).

Our creed is that when Jesus arose from the dead and as-

cended into heaven "he sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." So Ezekiel saw Him, and John on lonely Patmos and Stephen when He arose to welcome him (Acts 7:55) and Milton in his poem. The whirling wheels of this gigantic, gyroscopic chariot-throne are the wheels of God's providence in the history of redemption. The Negro spiritual has caught the true and deep interpretation:

"'Zekiel saw the wheel of Time
Every spoke was human kind
Wheel, O wheel!
De big wheel run by faith
De little wheel run by the grace of God
Wheel in the middle of a wheel."

In the dark days of slavery they, too, caught a vision of God in their captivity. Bound to the wheel of drudgery in the cotton-fields they saw the hand of Providence, "Little wheel run by the grace of God."

According to Ecclesiastes (1:4–12) all nature is a wheel and everything moves in cycles. From the whirling of protons and neutrons in the atom to the stellar universe, it is wheels within wheels. Everywhere we see velocity, order, intelligence; life controlled by God and not mere mechanism. The course of history is wheel within wheel. Revolution with progress or retrogression. Cycle upon cycle is the law of the universe. But it is not Blind Chance. God is on His throne. Providence rules destiny (Ezek. 21:27). All revolutions point to the Second Advent.

Toynbee's *Story of Civilization* tells of twenty-one civilizations that arose, flourished and went under or became stagnant. Nevertheless, as he shows, History is His story who came at the water-shed of all history and moulded it to the fullness of time for His purpose.

The history of the Jews is a proof of the Spirit in the wheels.

From Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian captivity, from thence to the rejection of the Messiah, the fall of Jerusalem, the European ghettos, the concentration camps of Hitler—and now back to the Promised Land. Ezekiel says the wheels are "high and dreadful" and also that they are "full of eyes" to those who can see.

And says Ezekiel, "they returned not." Always progress toward God's goal.

"Careless seems the Great Avenger.
History's pages but record,
One death-grapple in the darkness
'Twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold
Wrong forever on the throne!
But that scaffold sways the future
And behind the great unknown
Standeth God amid the shadows
Keeping watch above His own."

That is the interpretation of Ezekiel's wheels: God's hand in every man's life; His Providence in the long history of the church. The Old Testament gives many striking examples: Joseph sent captive into Egypt to preserve a whole nation by his wisdom and to save God's people; Moses called out of Egypt after his long preparation for a great task, learning all the wisdom of the Egyptians; then his sojourn in Midian and his call at the burning bush; till after forty years of wanderings he died on Nebo's lonely mountain. What a story of God's Providence! One hundred and twenty years of His guidance!

David as a shepherd-boy learned that Jehovah was his Shepherd and then, by devious pathways, dark sins and in the furnace of affliction, he probed the depths of human experience and the heights of forgiveness and restoration—all to give the wide world his bundle of psalms, a legacy for the ages.

The book of Esther is a striking story of God's overruling providence for the Jews and yet the *name* of God is strangely absent from the record; but the Spirit of Life is in the wheels. When the scaffold for Mordecai is already built, Royal insomnia leads to speedy reaction and complete deliverance of the doomed race (Esther, chapter 6).

In the New Testament we have a phrase used by Paul only once, "the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4); yet so pregnant in significance that volumes have been written on how the Spirit in the wheels prepared the time, the place and the very hour for the Incarnation—that greatest event in human history. On the blank page between Malachi and Matthew you may write an outline of the Divine preparation for the Advent. Four men, Socrates, Alexander, Julius Caesar and Judas Maccabeus; each to prepare the way of the Lord and build highways for the feet and the minds of the apostles. Four great cities flourished, each a future cradle for the Church: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome. Three great languages made one world of law, culture and ethics; Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Their appearance over a Cross on Calvary was deeply prophetic.

The Spirit of redemption was in the wheels of providence in the History of the Church for twenty centuries. Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* finds its key in Harnack's *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*. Two empires came into collision but Christ was triumphant.

The history of Modern Missions is replete with miracles to those who have eyes to see and hearts to understand. Again and again what seemed like disaster or defeat became victory because God "stood behind the shadows keeping watch." The Indian Mutiny in 1856; the Partition of Africa around a table in Brussels; the Armenian massacres (1900–1918) gave birth to new nations and the abolition of the Caliphate. The Boxer uprisings in China, what were they but the birth-throes of a new

era. After them came the forward movement in Missions. The bombardment of Manila, unjustified it may have been, but God over-ruled it for the good of the whole Philippine archipelago. We are too close to the First and Second World Wars to see the whole pattern of God. We gaze at the underside of His weaving and see the tangled skeins and broken threads. But the warp and woof of all history are in the hands of a Weaver who sits at the loom and knows and cares. His is "the good and acceptable and perfect will" in its origin and progress and final goal. We are wilfully blind if we fail to see God's hand in history.

The vision of Ezekiel applies also to the individual. Your belief in special Providence is the gauge of your piety, the measure of the nearness of God's living presence. Even the magicians of rebellious Pharaoh had to say finally, "this is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19). Look which way you will on the wheel of Providence in your own life and it has a face toward you. "The wheel is full of eyes." There are no blind forces in nature. God's face is everywhere. The Bible constantly speaks of the strength of His arm, of the work of His hands; even the starry firmament is the work of His fingers (Ps. 8:3). The same God who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names, healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds (Ps. 147:3,4).

Every man's life is a plan of God; we make or mar it. Our disappointments are His appointments. All things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. If you will observe providences, you will find providences to observe.

The Heidelberg Catechism has a question and answer on this subject which I learned *by* heart as a boy but understand better after eighty-two years *in* my heart. "What dost thou understand by the Providence of God?" "The Almighty and everywhere

present power of God whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth with all its creatures, and so governs them, that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things come not by chance but by His fatherly hand." That is true and practical Christianity. It shuts out barren discussion of God's decrees and predestination.

The daily round, the common task is the wheel of God's providence. He is the Potter and we are the clay.

> "Time's wheel runs back or stops;
> Potter and clay endure. . . .
> He fixed thee in this dance
> Of plastic circumstance.
> Machinery just meant
> To give thy soul its bent. . . ."

It is eccentricity that mis-shapes the clay. Is your life centric or eccentric to the will of God? There must be rest at the center if there is to be power at the circumference; for the Spirit of life is in the wheels. *Then also there is no friction.*

"This," said Ezekiel, "was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake" (1:28). "Or ever the golden bowl is broken or the silver cord is loosed, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccles. 12:6,7).

O God, Thou art our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea. We shall not be afraid of evil tidings for our hearts are fixed. Thou art in the midst of every circumstance and wilt help us right early. Amen.

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This book presents a series of entrancing studies of God's ancient people.

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