

characters are made wonderfully living and interesting. The chief character—the little pard—herself is certainly very attractive.

BUNYAN CHARACTERS. *Third Series.* By ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D. (*Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier.* Crown 8vo, pp. 301.) Notwithstanding that Dr. Whyte's lectures on the characters in the *Pilgrim's Progress* were heard in the delivery by great audiences, and were subsequently read by still greater audiences in weekly journals which reported them, the sale of the first series in book form has reached its twenty-first thousand, and of the second its tenth thousand already. We

are accustomed to great circulations like this in the books of the flesh but not in the books of the spirit, and it is one of the hopefulest signs of the times.

The third series of the *Bunyan Characters* is now issued. Its theme is the characters in the *Holy War*. Now the *Holy War* is not the *Pilgrim's Progress*. To some of us it is nothing at all. Dr. Whyte knew that. And therefore he took special pains with this book. He meant to make it as acceptable as any of the others, and even the instrument in commending the *Holy War* to our appreciation. And so it will yet be found to be the best book of the three, the fullest and the richest.

The Life of Jesus prior to His Public Ministry.

BY PRINCIPAL THE REV. DAVID BROWN, D.D., ABERDEEN.

THIS is the subject of a very interesting and beautiful paper in the May number of the *Thinker* by my revered and valued friend, Professor Godet, of Neuchâtel. On this article I desire to submit to the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES some observations in this paper.

Some things are taken for granted as settled which are merely the opinions of the writer. For example, in speaking of the brothers of Jesus, James and Simon and Joses and Judas and their sister Mary, Dr. Godet says, these were children born to Joseph and Mary sometime after the birth of Jesus. Dean Alford is of this opinion, and it has always been my own; but this has not been the general opinion, at least until recently. Down to the Reformation and until long afterwards, the general opinion has been the reverse of this. In the Church of Rome the universal belief, I think, is that Joseph and Mary did not live as husband and wife after the birth of Christ. Bishop Lightfoot has given strong reasons for believing that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were children of a former marriage by Joseph; and that as the name of Joseph disappears from the scene soon after his return from Jerusalem to Nazareth, he was probably a man of considerable age before his marriage to Mary. His arguments are not convincing to me; but be this as it may, Professor Godet should have only given his own opinion.

Again, our author says that Jesus never realised

His personal relation to the Father till He heard the voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." From that moment, says Dr. Godet, Jesus knew that He was the Son of God. I shall presently give good reason for believing that in this he is wrong. Once more, on the words, "He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and *as His custom was*, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read," Dr. Godet understands the italicised words to mean what Jesus was accustomed to do in the synagogue during the eighteen years of His stay at Nazareth—taking part in the services of the synagogue. I think this is an entire mistake. Jesus, I believe, never opened His mouth in public at Nazareth till the present occasion; and the words of the evangelist seem to imply this. The *custom* referred to is what He was accustomed to do during His long stay at Capernaum, and wherever He happened to be on the Sabbath day.

The most striking and original part of Dr. Godet's paper is where he points out how *sin*, appearing in everyone else except Himself, would gradually reveal to Him the difference between Himself and all others. 'Long before this He had been struck by a painful fact, a fact which separated Him from the other children of His age, from His brother and sisters—*sin*. It may be that He discovered a trace of it in the reproach

conveyed in the question of Mary herself, "Why hast Thou thus dealt with us?" and by which she meant to cast upon Him the blame of the separation which had taken place. And so the more sensible He became of His filial union with the Father, the more did He observe the absence of this perfect union with God in all with whom He held daily intercourse, and the more did He grow conscious of the isolation in which He lived amongst His fellow-men. This impression is probably involved in His reply, "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?"—not only in the place where My Father dwells, but in the place where His affairs are looked after, where His interests are attended to? It cannot be that this Youth of twelve had the consciousness of His eternal relationship with God, and that this expression, "My Father," was fraught with as deep meaning as it was later on. Words of sublime beauty may occasionally burst from the simple depths of a childish heart, sudden flashes of light which only in aftertime will resolve themselves into a serene and permanent radiance. All that passed during that night of solitude between the Child and His God was concentrated in the expression which remained a mystery to His parents—"My Father." But it is not only the word "Father" which makes this expression so remarkable, it is the word "My"; for this word gives to the consciousness here expressed by the Child, of His filial relationship with God, a peculiar and, as it were, exceptional significance.

But these, says Dr. Godet, were but impressions upon the heart of Jesus; they did not amount to knowledge. Yet what is this but to say that His impressions were ripening gradually into maturity during the eighteen years that still remained of His stay at Nazareth, when He had to leave it for the Jordan to be baptized by John. Certain it is that before that time He had the full consciousness of His real relation to the Father. Strange to say, throughout all this paper Dr. Godet makes no mention of the scene at His baptism, and the remarkable dialogue which took place between John and Jesus. Here it is: Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' But Jesus answering, said unto Him, 'Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he suffered Him.

But how came John to know who and what Jesus was? for they had probably never met before, at least since they were children. I think it was thus: John came to the Jordan from day to day to baptize the crowds that came there confessing their sins. Jesus could not join with them, having no sins to confess. But one day, when all the crowd had been baptized and disappeared from the stage, Jesus advanced by Himself; and John, struck with this, and, perhaps, something in His carriage different from all others, there seems to have flashed across his mind the conviction that this was He for whom he was sent to prepare the way, and to point out to the people when He came, and in the inspiration of the moment he exclaimed, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' and Jesus, owning the truth of this, would convince him at once that he was right.

But there seems to be some discrepancy between all this and John himself, when he said (John i. 33): 'And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, He said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.' But the meaning seems clearly to be that John at His baptism had only his own convictions confirmed by Jesus Himself; but he had not as yet seen the promised sign. But when he did see it, the Spirit descending upon Him as a dove, and abiding upon Him, assurance was then made doubly sure. And in the full and exulting consciousness of what He was as the Son of God, with the plenitude of the Spirit resting upon Him, he was prepared to be sent by the Spirit into the wilderness to begin his conflict, a conflict that lasted to the end.

A few words more. I have often wondered how Jesus had the Bible, so to speak, at His finger-ends on every occasion, and, selecting the passage exactly to His purpose, was able to quote it *verbatim*. No doubt His father Joseph had read the Scriptures to Him day by day; and His mother, taking the Boy on her knee, would tell Him the stories of the Old Testament, and being taught to read and write at home (for He was not at school like other Jewish boys), He would soon be able to read for Himself; and He would spend much of His time alone reading the Scriptures, and its statements would become imprinted on His memory, never to be forgotten.