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NORMAN H. SNAITH, M.A.(Oxon.).
Senior Kennicott Hebrew Scholar, 1925.

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PREFACE

THIS book has been written primarily because a growing intimacy with the Books of the Psalms has opened up, for at least one pilgrim in the Way, a veritable Aladdin's Cave of jewels flashing with the Light that is eternal. They are a treasure-house of records of spiritual experience such as have never been excelled in any other anthology whatever. In every age men have turned to them to find guidance in a confused world. They have, in the end, found the Strength that has made them more than conquerors and that Grace which is sufficient for the needs of every man.

These pages are a study of the various reactions of the sacred writers, chiefly the psalmists, to the insistence of the Book of Deuteronomy on the prosperity of the righteous. We have first traced the emergence of the problem from the teaching of the great prophets of the eighth century before Christ, chiefly Amos and Hosea. Next, we have turned to the psalmists as being confident that in them most of all we shall find portrayed those spiritual experiences which are

the reflections of the doubts and fears, the certainties and the hopes, of our generation equally with theirs. Having considered their attempts at a solution of the problem of the troubles of the righteous, we have traced the rise of Apocalypse as a further attempt on the problem, and lastly have found the answer in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel according to St. John.

And I would add this personal testimony. The more I study the Bible, critically, analytically prayerfully, the more I find in it that spiritual help which every man must have, and in myself that confidence in God which alone enables a man to continue along a road which on occasion can be so rough and steep that he scarce can clamber up it at all. If this little book can help some few along the road that leads to heavenly places, it will have accomplished its purpose.

NORMAN H. SNAITH.

LUTON,
June, 1935.

CHAPTER I

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PROSPERITY

'THERE is no new thing under the sun.' This is a faithless saying, and worthy of all condemnation. It is faithless, because it is doubly false, yet holds enough of truth to make it truly dangerous. It is worthy of condemnation, because it encourages that cheap, half-unmeaning cynicism which many of us in our less worthy moments are pleased to affect.

The saying is false, firstly, because the philosophy of living, which is portrayed in the context from which the saying is ruthlessly wrenched, is wrong. It is not that the Preacher is one of those who are condemned in the second chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon, those who are determined that 'no flower of Spring shall pass them by,' and have forgotten that 'there is a prize for blameless souls'; rather, he is a hedonist who has failed in his quest. He has not found, for all his seeking, that Happiness which is the goal of every man's desire. It is a Happiness which is bound up with Righteousness and Truth, the Righteousness which is immortal (Wisd. i, 15), and the Truth which 'abides and

is strong for ever' (1 Esdras iv, 38). Not finding this link, he never found any way at all. He is not even a false guide, and none realized this more clearly than he. Forlornly he makes the best of a sorry world, for 'all go unto one place,' both man and beast, 'all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again' (iii, 20). Therefore, 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might' (ix, 10). This is a saying which we use with frequency as a saying of courage and high endeavour, and in using it we rejoice as in the freshness of the morning like 'a strong man to run his course.' Not so the Preacher. He wrote in the bitterness of disillusion. His reason for working while it is day is certainly because 'the night cometh, when no man can work.' In John ix, 4 there is a work of God to be done, and it must be done while there is opportunity. It is of supreme importance that it should be done, in order that all may see that light eternal which is the Light of the World. But for the Preacher, there is a long, long night coming for every man, a darkness which has no dawn to chase away its shadows. The net result of all the labours of man will be nought. Ultimately it matters but little what work is done, or indeed if there be any done at all, for the result will be exactly the same in the end. If, however, a man does

want to work, then let him work now, speedily and with all his strength whilst yet he is still alive. It is his only opportunity, 'for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.' The only road the Preacher ever found was a circle; he came out by that same door through which he entered. Or, like Peer Gynt, at the end of his life-long quest he found himself back in the wood from which he started. But, unlike Peer Gynt, the Preacher found no Solveig waiting for him at the end of all his searching, and therefore found no faith, nor hope, nor love.

The Preacher is a dangerous counsellor for us to-day. He is indeed dangerous for every age, but most of all for this. This post-war world also has hoped for much, and also, like the Preacher, has found but little. We are exploring every avenue, just as he did, and with as little success, for there is but one road out of every maze. The Preacher never found it, and we do not care to tread it. It is, therefore, both tempting and easy for us to adopt his sated, dry-eyed pose, and, like him, to be a pessimist, and maker, or perchance collector, of choice apothegms. Our eyes are strained from too much seeing; our emotions are moribund from too much feeling. They cannot harrow us now

with Tales of Mystery and Horror, for we have left Edgar Allan Poe long centuries behind. We are 'gastados, used up, as the Spaniards say.' He, who would thrill us now, must pile Pelion on Ossa, and still fall short, for we have topped the Himalaya, and Melbourne is not three days from Mildenhall. Especially is all this true of those who now are in their late thirties and early forties. Thrown into the maelstrom of war before they had even begun to find their place in the world, forced to be men before they were youths, over-weighted with the experience of forty years crowded into four, and at last poured forth into a world whereof much was promised and little performed, what else should they be but what many of them are—without illusions, it is true, but suspecting that even Truth itself is illusion?

Secondly, the saying is false because there is still truth in the saying of Heracleitus, that sage of ancient time, 'All is change, and nought endures.' This is true of the phenomenal world, this long corridor of changing shapes and bewildering experiences, and it is of this world that the Preacher writes. He suspected no other. There is, mayhap, change in the working, but none at all in the result. The sun keeps on setting; the wind keeps on changing; the sea is always filling, but never is filled (i, 5-7).

There is but one end to every living thing. His tragedy was that, where he could not see, he had no faith, and therefore he was wholly wrong in his interpretation of what he actually did see. Always we explain what we see by what no eye can ever tell us. The Preacher saw thus far, 'that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness' (ii, 13), but he found no door to the Eden, to the Pleasant Garden of his dreams. He could not reach that master-key which Plato showed to men, and, unlike Alice in her Wonderland, there was for him no 'god in the machine' to bring him into the garden beyond the door. It is only dreams that are made of such stuff. Heracleitus was right in respect of this phenomenal world. Parmenides, who flatly contradicted Heracleitus, was mostly right in respect of the world of true Being. The Preacher was wholly wrong, because what he said of the one world was true, not of that world, but of the other. There certainly is, as Plato taught, a changelessness, but it is not under the sun. For us, it belongs to that Eternal City which has no need of any sun to shine upon it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.

The Preacher has in mind the vanity of a human life which ends with the grave. Neither righteousness nor wickedness can avail here,

for all die, good and bad together, and silence enfolds one and all. 'There is a righteous man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is an evil man that prolongeth his life in his evil-doing.' The fate which comes is independent of any deserving. Meanwhile, says he, one should not be righteous over much, nor make oneself over wise, lest one destroy oneself. At the same time, one should not be wicked over much, nor foolish over much. There is no need to die before one's time. This is not the advice of those Greek sages who, by a studied moderation, sought a glad and happy world. It is the despairing dictum of one who has given up all hope of finding a happiness on earth, and has no prospect of finding anything at all beyond. He seeks refuge in an apathetic mediocrity.

It is precisely here, though faced with exactly the same problem, that the psalmists triumph. They, too, were confronted with the prospect of a contrary world, a world gone wrong, a world of goodness cast down to the ground and wickedness exalted in high places. Like the Preacher, they also 'saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and beheld the tears of such as were oppressed; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, and they had no comforter' (iv, 1). But the psalmists were

greater than their times, for even the forty-ninth psalmist changes the adage that

> Man abideth not in honour:
> He is like the beasts that perish; (Ps. xlix, 12.)

and concludes that this applies only to the man who is in honour, but has no understanding (Ps. xlix, 20). Death is not his shepherd, for God redeems his life (the Hebrew word is *nephesh*—as also incidentally in Gen. ii, 7—not 'soul' as distinct from 'body' in the Greek sense, but rather the Hebrew idea of the thing that has life as distinct from the thing that has not life) from Sheol. These psalmists had found a faith and a confidence which no disappointments could disturb, nor any doubts destroy.

The difficulties of the psalmists began long centuries before the time of most of them. They were created by the prophets of the eighth century B.C. If it had not been for Amos and his contemporaries, there would have been no problem at all. Before the time of this shepherd from Tekoa, men had spoken of the Day of Jehovah. It meant the day when Jehovah would put things straight. They had assumed as beyond question, nor had they ever for one moment doubted, that when Jehovah put things straight He would necessarily set Israel on high. They were His people; He was their God. If

His people offered the prescribed sacrifices, and brought the first-fruits in their season, then Jehovah, for His part, would assuredly prosper Israel. Or, even supposing that the necessary sacrifices had not been brought and that Israel most shamefully and most persistently had neglected the worship of their God, yet if Israel were in sufficiently dire straits and in danger of irremediable disaster, then Jehovah would be sure to come to their aid and deliver them, if only 'for His Name's sake.' In more primitive times this latter phrase meant 'for His own credit's sake among the other gods.' How should He sit in the company of the Holy Ones, Himself a God without a people? He would be shamed for ever if He allowed His people to be blotted out. He would have failed in His one task, and have nothing left to do.

So long as the relations between Jehovah and His people were thought of in terms of the relations of an oriental king of early days with his subjects, there was no problem in the fate of the righteous. Men did not ascribe unexpected reverses and apparently undeserved misfortune to the inscrutable ways of Providence. Inscrutability there was, as much as any could desire, but there was no Providence. All things were ordered by the arbitrary rule of a Despot whose only law was His own capricious will. Israel

was the favourite of Jehovah. Jehovah therefore would exalt Israel, for favouritism in those days, whatever it may have done in other days or may still do in these, counted for more than worth. Sudden incursions of the Divine destroying power were always liable to occur, for Jehovah was a jealous God, who suffered none to trespass upon His rights, whether to touch the Ark, as Uzzah did (2 Sam. vi, 6 f.), or to number the people for his own, as did David the King (2 Sam. xxiv). There was, however, always a reason for such dire disasters, adequate enough for the men of that day or for the historian who recorded the happenings of other days. To-day, such happenings as earthquakes, typhoons, and other evils which are not caused by us, raise grave problems to our minds. Problems even more difficult are raised by the incidence of cancer, consumption, and the scourges of our modern race, which, whether caused or not caused by us, whether due to the heedlessness or to the wickedness of men, fall equally, so far as we can judge, upon the innocent and the guilty. If it were not that we believed in a righteous God of love, there would be no problem at all. We would not expect righteousness and goodness to fare any better in a neutral world than wickedness and iniquity. In fact there would be neither goodness nor iniquity.

We would be for once correct in describing all inexplicable disasters as 'acts of God.' This was exactly what the Hebrews did before the rise of the great ethical, henotheistic prophets of the eighth century B.C. Right living and evil living equally were like the flowers of spring, and had nothing to do with the case. It all rested in the hands of God Himself. This one He raised up, and that one He cast down, nor was there any reason for the choice in either case except that it was His pleasure so to do. When the eighth-century prophets began to speak of God as righteous, they raised difficulties in men's minds which in the nature of the case had never been there before.

Amos led the way in maintaining that righteousness was a prime factor in religion and an essential characteristic of Jehovah. In the Day of the Lord it would be righteousness that would be set on high. If Israel had been righteous, then assuredly it would have been a great day for Israel, and Israel would indeed have been exalted. The Day of the Lord would have been all that the most sanguine could have expected, brightness and light. But an unrighteous Israel must necessarily meet with disaster, for dear to the heart of Jehovah as is Israel, yet righteousness is dearer still. The fact of the special relationship between Jehovah and

Israel has but involved Israel in a greater responsibility. More of righteousness is therefore demanded, and not less. Jehovah has demanded, and will have, righteousness, though the nation perish.

This is not all the tale, for there arose another prophet also in the eighth century, Hosea. He was not a desert man, as was Amos, and therefore had not that element of strictest sternness which has characterized every desert prophet from the days of the Wanderings in the Desert to the time of the modern Rechabites, Ibn Saoud and his Wahhabis. Hosea insists, equally with Amos, on righteousness, but to it he adds another factor. Amos had said that the fact that Jehovah had chosen Israel out of all the families of the earth to be His own peculiar people involved a demand for increased righteousness for Israel. The standards of Moab and Moab's attitude to Moab's god were satisfactory enough for Moab and Chemosh, but Israel was not Moab, and Jehovah was not Chemosh. Hosea spoke of something other than a particular standard of conduct as being involved in, and arising out of, the relationship between Jehovah and His people. There was a reason why this ethical standard should be demanded. He spoke of the loyalty which was involved in such a covenant relation as this. The Hebrew word is *chesed,*

which Dr. George Adam Smith translated 'leal-love.' The term is applicable, as Dr. W. F. Lofthouse has pointed out, in an article in the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft,* 1933, Heft 1, pp. 29-34, and again in a somewhat different connexion, in *The Father and The Son,* 1934, pp. 212-214, to every case where there is set up a definite relation which demands loyalty to its spirit in both the giver and the receiver. Out of the bitter experience of his own family life Hosea learned something of the depths of the *chesed,* the loving kindness of Jehovah. Jehovah Himself is entirely loyal, and He longs for the same true *chesed,* the same true loyalty to the covenant, on the part of Ephraim and Judah. He has been most grievously disappointed, for this *chesed* has been 'as a morning cloud and as the dew which goeth early away' (Hos. vi, 4). It is this *chesed* which Jehovah prefers to sacrifices, and knowledge of Him to burnt offerings (Hos. vi, 6). Righteousness is involved, as Amos had insisted, but the whole story of Jehovah's dealings with His people is not told when the plumb-line has been applied and the bowing wall marked for destruction. Hosea learned from his own love for Gomer that not all her waywardness and her adulteries could destroy in his own heart his sense of loyalty to the covenant which still existed between them. Still, and in

spite of all, he longed for the old days when loyalty was supreme for her as well as for him. The subsequent disasters had but intensified and increased the yearning of his heart. To an even greater extent this must be true of Jehovah and Israel. 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I let thee go, O Israel?' (Hos. xi, 8). For ever, and without measure, Jehovah is longing to pour upon Israel all the riches of His grace and to afford to His people every evidence of His continued good favour.

There is, therefore, a covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel, and it is a covenant relation which nothing can destroy. There exist also mutual obligations between the two parties to this covenant. These obligations stand as long as the covenant endures. That is a characteristic of every covenant, and not least of this. If Israel fulfils her part in loyalty and love, then Jehovah most assuredly will fulfil His part also. In other words, a righteous Israel will necessarily enjoy the good favour of Jehovah, and since the Israelite of that day, and indeed for many days following, had no idea of any real life after death, then righteous Israel must of a certainty enjoy the good favour of Jehovah in this life. And it must be material prosperity, 'houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands' (Mark x, 30). There was

no other kind of prosperity which men could imagine.

It is true that the Hebrews of early days spoke of Sheol, the abode of the spirits of the dead, but Sheol was essentially a dead world, a world without hope and without desire.

> In death there is no remembrance of thee,
> In Sheol who can give thee thanks? (Ps. vi, 5.)

Or again,

> The dead praise not Jah,
> Neither any that go down into silence;
> But we will bless Jah
> From this time forth and for evermore. (Ps. cxv, 17 f.)

Or yet again,

> For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee;
> Those that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.
> The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. (Isa. xxxviii, 18 f.)

No passage shows more clearly than these verses from Hezekiah's prayer in his mortal sickness the desperate intensity of the Hebrew in the face of death. All the praise he could ever give to the God of his fathers he must offer whilst yet he is in the land of the living. All the good he could ever see he must see this side the grave. Man's inevitable fate is at last to be consumed, and to vanish away like a cloud (Job vii, 9).

The only occasion when the dead are represented as breaking the long silence of Sheol is in the taunt song of Isa. xiv against the King of Babylon. There the very speaking itself but emphasizes the helplessness of the dead, and their complete ineptitude.

> Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth. . . . All they shall answer and say unto thee, 'Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?' (Isa. xiv, 9 f.)

And so it follows that the good favour of Jehovah to the righteous must show itself here and now in prosperity and peace. Further, this must be evident to the eyes of all. Because Jehovah is a God of righteousness and because Jehovah is a God of *chesed,* therefore He will prosper the man who is righteous and himself is full of *chesed.* Prosperity and long life are the necessary consequences of righteousness and loyalty to Jehovah. In fact, deference to grey hairs is not alone the respect due from youth to age; it is also the reverence due to one whom Jehovah has richly blessed, one who, by the very fact that he is still alive, gives signal evidence that the good favour of Jehovah has been with him for 'length of days.'

The Hebrews, with characteristic thoroughness, developed this connexion between right-

eousness and prosperity into a hardened theory until it became a rigid dogma. It is acknowledged on every hand that the Hebrews have possessed a genius for religion such as never else has been known in the history of mankind. Greece for beauty and form; Rome for law and order; but Jerusalem for religion and for knowledge of the Living God. It is said, though possibly without that slender shaft of truth which is the justification of any epigram, that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains. True or not true concerning genius in general, it is certainly true of the Hebrews and religion. Their genius lay in their thoroughness, particularly in the thoroughness with which they could draw hard and fast lines. It consisted primarily in their innate faculty for saying 'either . . . or . . .', and in practice making that distinction sharp and clear. Actually, the whole truth is rarely to be found either in the 'either' or in the 'or.' Each, generally, holds some part of the truth, but it is only a part. The truth lies in a synthesis, wherein something of each is preserved. Not, however, all of each; for 'both . . . and . . .' is a dangerous and fatal road, all the more perilous because it seems to be the more safe. He who follows the broad and comprehensive road proves himself no guide for men; he will assuredly find himself and all his company

wanderers on a broad and trackless plain. On the other hand, he who chooses the narrow, exclusive way is the man who leads his fellows towards the light, though he himself may become so enamoured of the road that in finding the path he loses his way. If the slit be narrow enough, the light is no longer white, but shines with every colour of the rainbow. The image on the camera plate is inverted. That is because the aperture is small.

The best of the Hebrews, those who, like the prophets, most truly embodied the genius of their race, the 'remnant' in every generation, could invariably reduce life to 'either . . . or . . . .' Indeed, if many of those first invaders of Palestine had not continued to insist, and their children after them, that it was *either* Jehovah *or* the Baalim, and that it could not possibly be *both* Jehovah *and* the Baalim, the Hebrews as a people would have shared the fate of Abimelech, and of all who, like this ambitious half-caste, attempt to ride two horses. The religion of the Hebrews would have died almost before it had been born. The secret of this inability to compromise was in the original desert strain which never died out. Men who live close to death, men who live and work dangerously, have no use for compromise. Characteristically they are independent and intractable, whether they be

Bedouin from the desert or miners from the coal-face. Dr. Theodore H. Robinson, in the first volume of that *History of Israel,* in which he and Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley have most happily collaborated, has emphasized the importance in the development of the religion of Israel of those elements of the Hebrew people who had settled beyond Jordan to the East. These desert men were the men who could always say 'either . . . or . . . .' The Hebrews who settled in the fertile lands of Samaria forgot these alternatives of the desert, and at last were lost for ever in the welter of the peoples of the East. It was from the wilderness beyond Jordan that Elijah came with his 'either Jehovah or Melkart of Tyre,' but not both Jehovah and Melkart for Israel. From Tekoa, on the edge of a tract of country even more barren and forbidding than the eastern desert, from the edge of the Wilderness of Judah, came Amos, another desert man, with his denunciation of the calves of Samaria, and of every other evidence of departure from the strictness of the desert code. In the south there was always a nucleus who refused to compromise, with the result that the ancient faith survived the sack of Jerusalem and the ruin of the Temple which Solomon had built. During the following century the old rigour revived with increasing intensity, until it culminated in

the extreme exclusiveness of Nehemiah and Ezra. From these times the line was drawn firm and clear between Jew and Gentile. The application, at the end of the fifth century, of the regulations against marriage with those who were not of pure Jewish descent entailed considerable hardship. Men were faced with exile and with the withdrawal from them of the recognition by the religious authorities that they had any part or portion in Jehovah, as the only alternative to putting away both wife and family. Many truly pious souls were charged with the worship of false gods, and were alleged to be consorting with 'murderers and adulterers.' The hardness and ruthlessness of these times is reflected, we believe, in many of the psalms of the second and third books of the Psalms, namely, xlii-lxxxix. (See *Studies in the Psalter,* pp. 9-46.)

And yet, with all its narrowness, it was this movement of Habdallah, or Separation, carried out with ever increasing vigour and sternness, which saved Judaism in the second century before Christ. There were High Priests who were prepared to compromise with Greek thought and Greek ways, but the old fire and the old thoroughness never died. On the contrary, it flared into new flame in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the Maccabees for a time restored the ancient glories of their race, and

Israel basked in her Indian summer sun. When the later Maccabees grew prepared to compromise, then the glory once more departed. It has been the genius of the Jew, and his greatness, that, in what has mattered most of all, he has never been able to compromise. He has seen mighty empires rise and fall, these three thousand years and more since his wanderings began, but the Jew has refused to be crushed. He will not die. He is still a wanderer, but it is others who fall by the wayside, the kings and the tyrants and the princes, all who have sought to trample him down. He keeps his own path, an Ishmael among the nations, and, in spite of all vicissitudes, in the seats of the mighty or behind high ghetto walls, he has clung to those things which make him different from the Gentiles. He has refused to compromise. His thoroughness has made him great.

This same thoroughness was at work from the eighth century onwards on the problem of the righteousness of Jehovah and His *chesed* on the one side, and on the other side the fortunes of the righteous man who for his part kept *chesed*. It developed into the strict Deuteronomic doctrine of exact retribution in this present life, and was applied both to the nation and to the individual. The Deuteronomic system has its roots in the teaching of the eighth-century

prophets, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah of Jerusalem and Micah of Moresheth-gath. The dominating position which it attained is the measure of the success of their preaching. The prophets may have spoken to ears that would not hear, they may have been neglected or cast out, but they established for all time the truth among men that righteousness can never be divorced from religious zeal without irreparable disaster to both. Jerusalem may have killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her, but she learned what the prophets had to teach. In fact, the moral of the Destruction of the Temple by Titus and all the appalling horrors of the siege is that there were some parts of their message which she had learned only too well.

Under the influence of this one clear-cut idea, the whole history of the Hebrews was revised, and throughout the Old Testament there are traces of its effect. The story of the Wanderings in the Wilderness became one continued example of the Deuteronomic principle that the success and prosperity of the people of Jehovah depended precisely on, and varied directly as, the extent and the depth of their loyalty to Him and to their covenant with Him. The invasion of Palestine was examined from this same point of view, until we have the perfected scheme of the Book of Joshua. Even the ancient

traditions contained in the Book of Judges are set in a rigid framework where freedom and oppression alternate each with other exactly as loyalty to Jehovah replaces waywardness from His ways. Out of the earlier Deuteronomic teaching there developed the insistence upon the centralization of the worship at Jerusalem, the supplanting of the many shrines by the Single Sanctuary, and later still we have the Priestly Code. With this latter as background, the whole of the Law was re-edited, and the histories, which in the Books of Samuel and Kings had already received a strictly Deuteronomic impress, were yet again, in the Books of Chronicles, revised from the latest and most modern point of view.

The Deuteronomists were indeed very clear concerning the association of prosperity and righteousness. The two were indissolubly bound together. Equally, sin and adversity were cause and effect. It has always been so, said they, from the beginning. Repentance had always been followed by freedom from all oppressors and by prosperity on every side. Renewed sinning had involved new oppression, and with it poverty, and shame, and want. The Exile itself was the greatest calamity of all, and as they read over and over again the story of the last days of the kingdom, Manasseh and his idolatries,

Jeremiah and his faithfulness, the people and their stubbornness, the more they thought on these things the more convinced they became that every word their fathers had written was absolutely true. The Deuteronomic movement thus became a rigid cast-iron system of rewards and punishments, and through all ages, and in spite of all the problems which it creates, it has remained dominant in popular thought.

CHAPTER II

EVERY MAN IN THE PSALMS

We turn to the Books of the Psalms, for it is in the Psalter especially that we find discussed from its many points of view this Deuteronomic principle of righteousness and prosperity with its accompanying problems of righteousness and poverty, and of prosperity and wickedness. One of the strange features of modern Biblical study is the way in which many scholars persist in maintaining a comparatively late date for Deuteronomy and an early date for so many of the psalms. Either the Book of Deuteronomy, with terrible disasters which it threatened for neglect, that writing which was so new to Josiah the King that it threw him into instant consternation, must actually be earlier than 621 B.C., the date when Hilkiah the Priest found the Book of Law in the Temple, or the psalms which are definitely dependent on the Deuteronomic writings must be later than 621 B.C. In addition, psalms which deal with the problem of the righteous man in trouble must be later than the time of Amos and his contemporaries. Alternatively, the eighth-century prophets were

not the pioneers in proclaiming the righteousness of Jehovah. We must choose between these alternatives. They cannot all be true at one and the same time.

The comprehensiveness of the Books of the Psalms will always give them a foremost place among Old Testament writings, most certainly so far as the question of the religious experience of men is concerned. Every man, perplexed in mind and distressed in soul, can here find the mirror of his own experience. Here we can see those triumphs and those failures which are the lot of men in every generation, that common lot which convinces us that 'He hath made of one blood every nation of men.' There is a strange timelessness about the psalms. They belong to every age, and every generation of man has found in them comfort and guidance and strength. Every phase of human life finds in them an echo, and the famous *Leb Aboth* of the sixteenth-century Rabbi, Solomon ben Isaac the Levite, is as true of the Books of the Psalms in particular as it is of the Old Testament in general: 'In the Bible, without doubt, are history and tale; proverb and enigma; correction and wisdom; knowledge and discretion; poetry and word-play; conviction and counsel; dirge, entreaty, prayer, and every kind of supplication; and all this in a Divine way superior to all

the prolix benedictions in human books; to say nothing of its containing in its depths the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He, and secrets of being without end.'

From the earliest days among Christians the Psalms of David have occupied a central place both in public worship and in private devotion. Already, less than thirty years after the Crucifixion, we find the Apostle Paul, when writing to the infant Church at Corinth, making such reference to the psalms as would indicate the prominent position which they held in the common worship.

> When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. (1 Cor. xiv, 26.)

The form of worship at Corinth in those first days seems to have allowed the maximum of freedom—far too much freedom if we are to judge by the admonitions of the Apostle. That the use of the psalms was a feature in what appears to have been a more orderly and developed form of worship is clear from his references elsewhere to 'psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs' (Eph. v, 19; Col. iii, 16). These psalms could be no other than the Psalms of David, since they are most carefully distinguished both from hymns and from spiritual songs. Indeed, in the Apostolic Constitutions, ii, 59 (A.D. third century), it is definitely stated

that the 'hymns of David' were sung after the reading from the Old Testament. In the matter of the use of the psalms in public worship, the early Christian Church, even in Gentile communities such as that at Corinth, undoubtedly followed the model of the Jewish synagogue, equally as in the custom of reading from the Scriptures and in the form, and in some instances even in the phraseology, of the prayers. This has been shown most clearly by Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley in *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*.

The practice of these first days has been followed in all succeeding generations. In the time of Tertullian (*c.* A.D. 150–225) the Scriptures were read, the psalms were sung, sermons were delivered, and petitions offered, during the Sunday morning service (*De Anima* ix). In the fifth century Gennedius, Patriarch of Constantinople, refused to ordain any man who could not repeat the Psalter by heart, so essential had an intimate knowledge of the psalms become to the proper accomplishment of the duties of the priest. Gregory the Great (*c.* A.D. 540–604) would not consecrate a bishop who had not committed the whole of the Psalter to memory, and his action was confirmed by the Second Council of Nicæa (A.D. 787), the Council which also ordered the restoration of images to the

places from which the Emperor Leo the Isaurian and his followers had dislodged them, and further, established a distinction between the veneration which might be offered to images and the adoration which could be offered to God Himself alone. The same attitude with respect to the thorough and complete knowledge of the Psalter was adopted by the Eighth Council of Toledo (A.D. 653), and by the Council of Oviedo (A.D. 1050). The recital of the psalms, indeed, occupied such a large place in the services of the Church, that when an arrangement was made whereby the whole of the Psalter was recited once each week, this entailed, not an increase, but a considerable diminution, in the use of the psalms.

In private devotion also, in the words of St. Chrysostom, 'David comes first, last, and midst.' St. Jerome bears witness to the continued use of psalms in the agricultural life of Palestine, during ploughing and reaping, and whilst dressing the vines. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is said to have repeated the Psalter daily, and St. Kentigern, a sixth-century bishop of Glasgow, every night. The same custom was observed by Maurus, the disciple of St. Benedict (born *c.* A.D. 420), by St. Alcuin, the tutor of Charlemagne (died A.D. 814), and by St. Leo IX (died A.D. 1054). A less happy side

to this constant use of the psalms is seen in the case of St. Dominic the Cuirassier (*d.* A.D. 1060), who 'made such taskwork of the matter' that he recited two Psalters daily, taking discipline the while, but in Lent never less than three, and on one occasion as many as eight.

Throughout the West, the Psalter has been first and foremost both as hymn-book and as prayer-book. All branches of the Christian Church, Celtic, Greek, Roman, Reformed, have combined in this continued loyalty. Neale and Littledale (*Commentary on the Psalms,* Vol. I, pp. 6–74, where the details given above are for the most part to be found) give a complete account of the use of the psalms in the various offices of the Church. In the Eastern Church the Psalter is recited once a week, but twice a week during the weeks of the Great Fast. During Holy Week it is recited once, not at all from Maundy Thursday to the Eve of Low Sunday, and again regularly from thence once a week throughout the year. In the Latin Church, from the earliest known Roman ritual down to the reforms of the sixteenth century, there was an arrangement whereby the psalms were sung once a week, both in the 'secular' use and in the 'monastic' use. This latter was due immediately to the influence of St. Benedict, but it has associations as far back as with the Egyptian

ascetics. Since the reforms of the sixteenth century the number of psalms in the Roman rite has been greatly reduced, until now some fifty only are used, and these, generally speaking, are the shortest. The Anglican liturgy allows for a cycle of thirty days. The use of the psalms, therefore, has been consistent and devoted through the centuries.

In the regular recital of the Psalter it is very probable that the Christian Church has followed the Jewish model. There is no certain evidence of this, but a considerable measure of probability. One of the truly astonishing things in Old Testament study is the meagre amount of information concerning the use of the psalms which has been handed down by the Rabbis. Such information as we have is confined to the use of the psalms which were used in the daily services, and to those which were used at festivals. According to the Mishnah (Tamid vii) and the Talmud (b Rosh hashShanah 30 b, 31 a), the daily psalms were, for the first day of the week, xxiv; for the second day, xlviii; and for the succeeding days, lxxxii, xciv, lxxxi, xciii, with xcii for the Sabbath. Psalm xcii is confirmed as the psalm for the Sabbath Day by the Hebrew Massoretic Text and therefore also by the English versions. The psalms for the third and the fifth days are confirmed by the

Septuagint. The singing of the psalm was commenced when the priest began to pour out the drink offering. It was sung in three parts with pauses, certainly for the sounding of trumpets, and probably also for music and choral responses.

The psalms for the festivals were chiefly the Hallel, cxiii–cxviii. By some this was called the Egyptian Hallel, in order to distinguish it from the Great Hallel, cxx–cxxxvi, and also from cxlvi–cl, but the tradition concerning the whole matter of the Hallel is confused. The Hallel was sung during the slaying of the Paschal Lamb. There is evidence also that cxxxv was sung during the Passover Service (see Mueller, in his edition of the tractate Sopherim, xviii, 2). The Hallel was also sung at the Feast of Tabernacles and at the Feast of Dedication. Additional Festival Psalms were cxviii for the Feast of Tabernacles, and cxx-cxxxiv during the torch dance of the night festival at that feast. xxx was allocated to the Feast of Dedication, and both lxxxi and xxix to the New Year Festival of the seventh month. Details of the use of the psalms in the early synagogues and also in the modern rites of the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic Jews are to be found in Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley's *The Psalms in the Jewish Church,* pp. 141-172.

The use of the psalms in the Temple was,

however, undoubtedly much more extensive than any of the traditions allow. Many attempts have been made to find occasions in the Temple Services for the use of many other psalms, for all are agreed that here in the Psalter we have the continued expression of the devotion of pious souls, the prayers and the praises of Jew and Gentile for at least two and a half thousand years.

Among other attempts, Volz (*Das Neujahrsfest Jahwas*, 1912) proposed as the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles, viii, xxvii, xlii, lxviii, xcii, ciii, cxiii-cxviii, cxix (?), cxx-cxxxiv. Mowinckel (*Psalmenstudien* ii, 1922) suggests numerous psalms as a liturgy for a New Year Feast, which he holds was celebrated in the ritual annually, namely, the Coronation Psalms, xlvii, xciii, xcv-c (we would not include xcv and c as Coronation Psalms), with the addition of viii, xxiv, xxix, xxxiii, xlvi, xlviii, l, lxvi A, lxxv, lxxvi, lxxxi, lxxxii, lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii, cxiv, cxviii, cxxxii, cxlix. Keet (*A Liturgical Study of the Psalter*, 1928) suggested cxviii as the psalm for the Feast of Dedication. We have suggested elsewhere (*Studies in the Psalter*, 1934) that xc-xcix were the original Sabbath psalms, with xxix later replacing xciv, and that c was the original daily psalm.

There are also traces of an arrangement

whereby the Psalter was recited in Palestine Sabbath by Sabbath during a three-year cycle, corresponding to the Triennial Reading of the Law. Buechler (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. V, p. 420; Vol. VI, p. 1) established as beyond question the fact of the existence of such a triennial lectionary in Palestine, together with an accompanying series of Haphtaroth, or readings from the Prophets. Since then, that is since 1893, E. G. King (*Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. V, pp. 203 ff.) and St. John Thackeray (*J. T. S.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 177 ff.) have suggested schemes whereby the Psalter was recited similarly during a three-year period. In the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (X Band, 1933, Heft 3/4, pp. 302-307) we have suggested another system of allocation of psalms to Sabbaths, according to which eight psalms were allocated rigidly to every period of two months, any alterations due to there being more than eight Sabbaths in this period being made within this group in order that the disturbance might be localized. In this way there are sufficient psalms for the whole period of three years, and four psalms are left for the intercalary month. We have suggested also that in this arrangement is to be found the reason for the division of the Psalter into five books. It is so divided, as the ancient Midrash on the psalms said many

centuries ago, in order to correspond to the five books of the Law, since, according to the scheme proposed every book of the Psalter, except only the fifth, is commenced on exactly the same Sabbath as the corresponding Book of the Law. For the explanation of the discrepancy between the days on which the fifth books were commenced we would refer to an article entitled 'The Psalter of the Chronicler' in the *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* for January, 1934.

The psalms, then, have been in constant use, both privately and publicly, for many centuries. We have said that there is a strange timelessness about the psalms. This is partly because the Psalter is not the work of any one writer, nor indeed the product of the work of any one generation. There is certainly at least one Maccabaean psalm in the Psalter, namely cxlix, and, therefore, if we allow that there are any Davidic psalms, we have a Psalter extending over a period of nearly nine hundred years. Any scholar who has attempted to fix the date of any particular psalm has soon become conscious that he has engaged himself upon one of the most difficult tasks of Old Testament study. No investigation is more fraught with the dangers and perils of subjective judgement. There are remarkably few references in the psalms to

contemporary events. cxxxvii is almost unique for the way in which it dates itself by its references to Zion and Babylon. The psalm belongs most clearly to the period immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., when the Edomites rushed in headlong to take advantage of the overthrow of their rivals of many generations. Then it was that the ancient rivalries of Judah and Edom, reflected from the beginning in the stories of Jacob and Esau, flared up into a bitterness which lasted until both Judah and Edom had ceased to be. This is the period also of the hard words of Obad. 8-14; Isa. xxxiv, 5 f.; Isa. lxiii, 1-6. There are psalms which presuppose a Temple standing, but it must be decided by other considerations whether the references are to the Temple built by Solomon, or the Second Temple for which Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel and Jeshua were responsible.

Not only is there this almost complete absence of reference to contemporary historical events, but there are also obvious additions, and equally clear indications of a process of re-editing. The 'burnt offering and whole burnt offering' of Ps. li, 19, is almost certainly an insertion, though it is not essential to assume, as many do assume, that the whole of the last two lines is an addition. There have been extensive changes in Pss. ix, x.

These two psalms were originally a single psalm, an acrostic of twenty-two verses wherein each verse commences with successive letters of the alphabet. There are several instances where such a scheme is preserved in its entirety. The best examples are the monumental eulogy in praise of the Deuteronomic Law, namely Ps. cxix, which is composed of twenty-two stanzas, each with eight lines, wherein each line begins with the stanza letter, and also Prov. xxxi, 10-31, 'The A B C of the perfect housewife,' as Prof. Toy happily named it. But in Pss. ix, x only the remnants of the original scheme are found, for the regular succession of the letters of the alphabet is broken after the third letter, resumed with the fifth, broken again after the twelfth, and resumed at the nineteenth.

The secret of the timelessness of the Psalms lies behind all these changes which are evident in the Psalter itself, and is actually the reason for these very changes themselves. Here, in the psalms, we find the very bed-rock of religious experience; here we find men driven back upon God, seeking in Him alone their hope and their stay, realizing that, never in any other, but for ever in Him, they can find their joy and their salvation. The immediate happenings are relegated to the background, and the 'accidental'

chances are stripped away. The psalmists have peeled off the husks of experience, and have sought the very kernel of it all. It matters but little whether the oppressor happens to be Pharaoh, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Antiochus; it matters very little more whether the oppressor is within or without the community of the People of Jehovah. Ultimately, in either case, it mattered as little to the psalmist then as it matters to us now. There was always a reason for his experiences, and it was the same reason every time. Furthermore, the solution was always the same. The reason for the hard experience was that he had got away from God, and the solution was in getting back to Him as speedily as might be. Therefore, in every age, whenever men have been able to divest themselves of those elements in their experience which change with the passing of the years, they have been able to find a new inspiration, and a strange surprising aptness in these Praises of Israel. Rebecca, the daughter of Isaac of York, prisoner in the Preceptory of Templestowe, and doomed to die on the third day unless her challenger appear and conquer, sings of other prisoners of by-gone days, prisoners who were released from bondage, and she prays for herself and for all Israel that the same guiding light may still shine which led her fathers through the desert.

When Israel of the Lord beloved,
Out of the land of bondage came,
Her father's God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame.

. . . . .

But, present still, though now unseen;
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of thee a cloudy screen
To temper the deceitful ray.
And, oh, when stoops on Judah's path
In shade and storm the frequent night,
Be Thou, long-suffering, slow to wrath,
A burning, and a shining light.

Always, at root, the same experience; always the same temptations and the same darkness of the soul; but always, through prosperity and adversity alike, the same Guide and Screen.

The genius of the Hebrew people is evident in the Law and in the Prophets, but the psalms are the fine flower of their blossoming. Without the Prophets there would have been no law, nor any people to preserve the law during those troublous times which lasted from the fifth century onwards. Without the Law of the days following Ezra there would have been no Judaism. The psalms are the creation of both loyalty to the law and devotion to the prophets. They have been the inspiration of youth and the comfort of age, nor has Our Lord Himself been alone in dying with the verse of a psalm

upon His stiffening lips. The psalms, indeed, comprise the whole gamut of human experience, from mazes of bewilderment and depths of despair to rocks of sure defence and mountain-peaks of delirious delight. In moments of joy the Jew sang the Hallelujah psalms; exiled and far from home, he could turn to Pss. xlii and xliii or to the first part of Ps. cxxxvii. Whether 'Out of the Depths' or looking 'up to the hills,' there is always a psalm of David which every man can sing.

With respect to the problem raised in the first chapter, the incidence of pain and distress—for some psalmists the whole matter is very clear. They have no doubts; there is no problem at all. Righteousness is followed by prosperity; unrighteousness is followed by the loss of prosperity. In the Asaphite Psalm lxxxi (probably from the second half of the fifth century), we find the orthodox Deuteronomic position, and it is stated in the regular Deuteronomic phrases.

But my people hearkened not unto my voice;
And Israel would have none of me.
So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart,
That they might walk in their own counsels.
Oh, that my people would hearken unto me,
That Israel would walk in my ways!
I should soon subdue their enemies,
And turn my hand against their adversaries.

The haters of Jehovah should submit themselves to him,
But their (*i.e.* Israel's) time should endure for ever.
He should feed them also with the finest of wheat;
And with honey out of the rock would I satisfy thee.
(Ps. lxxxi, 11-16.)

The twenty-third psalm also is essentially Deuteronomic in its setting, whatever the date of the psalm may be. The righteous man is like a sheep of the flock, and Jehovah is the Shepherd who enables him to lie down in safety in the green pastures, fresh with grass after the latter rains. He is conscious of the presence of Jehovah even in the gorge of dark shadows, and knows well he need fear no ill. Always he has abundance, a full table in the presence of his enemies, his head anointed with oil, and an overflowing cup. Goodness (*i.e.* prosperity, as in Ps. xxxiv, 12; Eccles. ii, 24; and elsewhere) and mercy (the word is *chesed,* see p. 19 above) will surely follow him all the days of his life, and he will dwell in the House of Jehovah for length of days. The prosperity of the righteous is most obvious here, since it is to be flaunted in the face of his foes. In the best known psalm of all, therefore, we find established the close connexion between righteousness and prosperity.

If any man should say, as indeed many do,

'Who will shew us any good?' the answer is very simple. It is that of the fourth psalmist,

> Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
> And put your trust in Jehovah. (Ps. iv, 5.)

The fifth psalmist is equally confident,

> So shall all they that put their trust in thee rejoice,
> They shall ever shout for joy, because thou shalt defend them,
> They also that love thy name shall be joyful in thee.
> For thou wilt bless the righteous;
> O Jehovah, thou wilt compass him with favour as with a shield. (Ps. v, 11 f. [R.V. Margin].)

There are many other psalmists who have no misgivings whatever of the accuracy of the universal application of the strict Deuteronomic principle, the sixteenth, the twenty-first, the twenty-fourth (verse 5), the twenty-fifth (13), the fiftieth, the fifty-second, the fifty-fifth (in spite of present treacheries), the fifty-eighth (11), the eighty-fifth, the ninety-first, the ninety-second (12-15), the ninety-seventh (10-12), the one hundred and forty-sixth, and the one hundred and forty-seventh. The eighteenth psalmist boldly declares,

> I was also perfect with him,
> And I kept myself from iniquity.
> Therefore hath Jehovah recompensed me according to my righteousness,
> And according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. (Ps. xviii, 23 f.)

The full Deuteronomic picture of the blessings which tread on the heel of the righteous is found in Ps. cxliv, 12-15:

Then shall our sons be as plants grown up in their youth;
And our daughters as corner stones hewn after the fashion of a palace;
When our garners are full, affording all manner of store;
And our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields;
When our oxen are well-laden;
When there is no breaking-in, and no going forth;
And no outcry in our streets.
Happy is the people that is in such case:
Yea, happy is the people, whose God is Jehovah.

Or again,

Blessed is every one that feareth Jehovah,
That walketh in his ways.
For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands:
Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts of thine house:
Thy children like olive plants, round about thy table.
Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed
That feareth Jehovah.
Jehovah shall bless thee out of Zion,
And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.
Peace be upon Israel. (Ps. cxxviii, 1-6.)

These psalmists, apparently, have never had

any reason to doubt that the goodness of Jehovah is shown in the regular application of the Deuteronomic rule. They can say with the sixteenth psalmist,

> The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places,
> Yea, I have a goodly heritage. (Ps. xvi, 6.)

But there are other psalmists, for whom life has been anything but pleasant. They are passing through deep waters. They comfort themselves as best they may. It is only for a moment, says the thirtieth psalmist. It is not for ever, agree the ninth (verse 18), the seventy-fourth, the seventy-fifth, and the seventy-seventh. God is testing us, say the eleventh (4 f.) and the sixty-sixth (10), or He is angry with us, suggests the sixtieth (1). Some go so far as to say that Jehovah is neglectful, that He must awake (the forty-fourth and the forty-ninth); He must arise (the twelfth), stir up (the thirty-fifth and the eighty-second), and make haste (the fortieth and the one hundred and forty-third). Perhaps He is hiding, says the tenth (1), or maybe He is far away, say the twenty-second (1, 19) and the thirty-eighth (21). None of these psalmists doubts the system under which he has been brought up. They are trying to find out why it is that Jehovah is not doing what they think He should do, when they think He ought to be

doing it. Something has gone wrong, and the covenant is not working out as it should. With time-honoured naivety, and after the universal tendency of human kind, they are assuming that the fault is not on their side, but on the side of the other party to the covenant. God, they say, for some reason is not fulfilling His obligations under the covenant.

The thirty-second psalmist also maintains the accuracy of the Deuteronomic system, and in his own experience, though it be similar for the most part to that of these others, he sees the proof. There was a time, he says, when he was in distress, but he realized that the cause of it was his own sin. When he confessed his sin, then Jehovah forgave him, and, whilst there may have been a time during his tribulation when he began to doubt, now the certitude of the old formula is re-established firmly and strongly in his mind and heart.

> Many sorrows shall be to the wicked,
> But he that trusteth in Jehovah, mercy shall compass him about. (Ps. xxxii, 10.)

He is now all the more sure of this, because his sorrows came to him in the days of his unrighteousnes. There are other psalmists who agree with him, namely, the sixty-fifth, the eighty-fifth, and the eighty-ninth. The thirty-first psalmist had once denied that there was

any connexion between prosperity and goodness, but he has realized since then that he spoke in haste.

One psalmist, the one hundred and forty-first, seems to revel in his pain, and to invite affliction (4 f.). He is the only psalmist who lays himself open to the charge of masochism. There are many psalmists who are in deep waters, but this one rejoices in it, and for him the deeper the waters the more he is pleased. The others have no solution, and can find but little comfort. They cry 'How long?' and continue to suffer with what patience they may. So, the fourteenth, the fifty-fifth, the fifty-sixth, the fifty-seventh, the seventy-first, the seventy-ninth, the eightieth, the ninety-fourth, and the one hundred and second. Two psalmists, the sixth and the forty-ninth, extract cold comfort from the consolation, such as it is, that it will all be the same when life is past, for then the wicked man is no better off than the righteous.

The orthodox Deuteronomic position is maintained fully in the Deuteronomic psalm *par excellence,* namely, the one hundred and nineteenth psalm. We are of the opinion that this is the psalm which was recited in Palestine on the Sabbath when the first portion of the Book of Deuteronomy was read in the course of the triennial lectionary. This was the 117th Sabbath

of the cycle. (See article mentioned above, in *Z.A.W.*, 1933, Heft 3/4, p. 304.) Nowhere in this long alphabetical acrostic is the rigid application of the Deuteronomic theory neglected. When the psalmist has respect unto all Jehovah's commandments, then he will not be ashamed (verse 6). Life comes from observing Jehovah's word (17). Because the psalmist has kept Jehovah's testimonies, Jehovah should remove contempt and reproach from him (22). Here the psalmist finds himself unable to deny that at least there has been delay in the fulfilment of the promises, and this same attitude appears also in other stanzas, for instance, in the daleth-stanza (25-32), in the he-stanza (33-40), and in the vau-stanza (41-48). In verse 49 the psalmist's comfort in affliction is in the word of Jehovah. He remembers the judgements of Jehovah in ancient time, and comforts himself. The promises will eventually be fulfilled. In the teth-stanza (65-72), we find a new element. The afflictions of the righteous are a reproof to him, that he might learn the statutes of Jehovah. His distresses are therefore not penal, as so often in the Old Testament and very frequently in other psalms, but they are remedial. This attitude is a development from the original Deuteronomic point of view, for in the Book of Deuteronomy itself, the distresses which follow wickedness

and waywardness from the covenant are essentially penal. In some passages a return to prosperity is promised after repentance, Deut. iv, 29; xxx, 1-3; &c.; and in Solomon's Deuteronomic prayer in 1 Kings viii, the same assurance is sought again and again. The passage which makes the closest approach to a remedial point of view is Deut. viii, 2,

> And thou shalt remember all the way in which Jehovah thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

But even here the idea is rather that the troubles during the time of the Wanderings were a prolonged test and not a remedial punishment. The attitude in 1 Kings viii, 36, 'because (R.V. margin) thou teachest them the good way wherein they should walk,' is probably remedial, especially since the previous verse speaks of the people giving up their sin under Jehovah's chastisement. In any case there is in Ps. cxix, 65-72, a development from the original Deuteronomic point of view.

There remain for consideration Psalms xxxiv, lxxxiv, cxii, lxxi, and xxxvii; Psalms lxxiii, xxvii, and xlii-xliii; Psalms lxxviii, ciii, cvi, cxvi, cxxx and cxxxix; Psalms i and lxxxviii. These are all concerned with various aspects of the

break-up of the original Deuteronomic position. Not for ever could even the most devout and uncritical of religious people maintain that in it was contained the whole truth of the matter. In the psalms with which we have hitherto dealt, whatever point of view is put forward, or whatever suggestions are made, the Deuteronomist position is maintained with only the faintest shadows of doubt. These other psalms are of a different temper. We propose to discuss in detail each of these groups in turn, together with various problems which arise out of them.

CHAPTER III

THE FAITH OF THE PSALMISTS

(Pss. xxxiv, lxxxiv, cxii, lxxi, xxxvii)

THE testimony of some psalmists is that 'many are the afflictions of the righteous,' but their faith nevertheless is unimpaired, and the thirty-fourth psalmist, for example, can follow with 'But Jehovah delivereth him out of them all' (verse 19). This psalm is a glorious song of confidence in Jehovah. The righteous man can always be free from fear in no matter what straits he may find himself. Jehovah will deliver him out of all his troubles, and not one of his bones will be broken.

> What man is he that desireth life,
> And loveth many days, that he may see good? (Ps. xxxiv, 12.)

Then let him fulfil the Deuteronomic demands, and Jehovah will assuredly give him that prosperity and joy which he desires to see.

The eighty-fourth psalmist is equally confident. If we are correct in assuming (see p. 85 below) that he was an exiled Korahite whose prayer for a renewed opportunity of worshipping God in His Holy Temple had at last been granted, then

he had every reason to be joyful of heart, and to believe that the Deuteronomic principle was sound. It had indeed been abundantly realized in his own experience.

Nowhere is the prosperity of the righteous expressed with more assurance than in the one hundred and twelfth psalm. The man who fears Jehovah, that is, says the psalmist, the man who delights greatly in His commandments, shall have every sign of good favour showered upon him. His seed shall be mighty; his posterity shall be blessed. In his house there shall be wealth and riches, 'and his righteousness shall endure for ever,' where (3) righteousness seems to be taken to be practically synonymous with wealth and riches, so closely are the two intertwined. He shall fear for nothing, and 'his horn shall be exalted with honour' (9). And to complete the picture,

> The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;
> He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:
> The desire of the wicked shall perish. (Ps. cxii, 10.)

No more certain and confident picture could be drawn. The psalmist has no doubts whatever. With all the emphasis he can muster he insists, as also do his companions, the thirty-fourth and the eighty-fourth psalmists, on the association of prosperity with righteousness. Righteousness has its inevitable reward in wealth and prosperity,

whilst evil is bound to meet with a fit and proper retribution.

But the remarkable and determined faith of the psalmists is most evident in two psalms written by two old men. These psalms are xxxvii and lxxi. They are, in fact, the only two psalms to which we can point as having been written definitely by men of advanced years. For the establishment of those who would be firm in the faith, they are the two greatest psalms of all.

The seventy-first psalmist has trusted in God all his life. From the day that he was born God has been his benefactor. The old man is a marvel to many. He has had his hard times, and even now his enemies are plotting his discomfiture. Even as he is writing the times are so bad with him that his enemies are saying that God has forsaken him. But the old man will have none of it. His courage does not fail and his hope is undismayed. On the contrary he will praise God more and more as the days pass by. From his youth up he has declared the wonderful works of God, and he certainly does not intend to stop now. He prays that in these latter days, when he is old and grey-headed, God will not in truth forsake him, for there is still a work to do, to declare the strength of the arm of God to the next generation. For there is none like unto God. God has showed

the psalmist, he admits, many troubles, but He will give him new life. He will raise him up though it be from the depths of the earth. Still will the psalmist's lips rejoice, and all day long he will be talking of the righteous acts of God.

The same confidence is expressed by the other old man, the thirty-seventh psalmist.

> Commit thy way unto Jehovah;
> Trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass.
> And he shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light,
> And thy judgement as the noonday. (Ps. xxxvii, 5 f.)

So certain is he of the unfailing faithfulness of Jehovah, and so full of assurance is he that this faithfulness is bound to show itself in the speedy reward of the righteous with all the good things of this present life, that he even goes so far as to say,

> I have been young, and now am old,
> Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
> Nor his seed begging their bread. (Ps. xxxvii, 25.)

He has indeed made very bold to say that. Is such a statement in accordance with the facts? Has the psalmist's enthusiasm run away with him? Or has he made up his mind so firmly *a priori* that no amount of subsequent experience can ever enable him to come to any other conclusion?

The verse must doubtless be read in con-

junction with the previous verse, where the psalmist says that

> Though he (*i.e.* the righteous man) fall, he shall not utterly be cast down.

That is to say, any discomfiture which befalls the righteous man can be but temporary, and it is only a matter of time until his prosperity is completely restored. It may be that this is actually what the psalmist has seen, but it does not justify the extreme statement of verse 25. All there is to say is that if the psalmist is writing from his own experience, then his experience is strangely different from that of the vast majority of his fellow-men. Indeed, there can be extraordinarily few but have seen the state of affairs the existence of which the psalmist so vigorously denies. Every man of any experience at all must, on occasion, have seen the righteous forsaken, and both him and his family in the direst poverty. The psalmist must have seen it also, unless either he refused to see anything at all, or his experience of the world of men was so limited as to be valueless. Such poverty and distress must have been there before his very eyes, for the world can scarcely have changed to any marked extent in this respect these two thousand years and more. There are psalmists, for example, of his generation or another, who

profoundly disagree with Ps. xxxvii, 25, for their psalms are full of nothing else than the undeserved distress and poverty of the righteous. Ps. cix, for instance, is a prayer that the wicked may meet with the fate they deserve, and, if the old doctrine is sound, ought to have suffered long before. The psalmist prays for every kind of disaster to overtake them. He himself, meanwhile, is in the last extremity of poverty and sickness (22-25). Similar testimony is borne by the twenty-second, the thirty-first, the fifty-fifth and other psalmists. The forty-fourth psalmist and his companions have made their boast in God all the day long, but their souls are bowed down to the dust. The whole psalm from verse 9 to the end is one of the most heart-rending pleas for rescue and justice which have ever been written.

We come, perforce, to the conclusion that when the thirty-seventh psalmist denies that he has ever seen the righteous man in distress, he is not stating a fact so much as expressing a conviction. And it is a conviction which he is determined to maintain whatever the facts may seem to say. He knows well enough what is often the lot of the righteous. He needs no other psalmist to tell him that, for he commences with a warning that we should not be envious of the unrighteous man who prospers, because

his time is short. Moreover, the psalmist himself is fully aware that sometimes the righteous man has very little which he can call his own (16), and since he insists so strenuously that this little is better than the riches of many wicked, it may very well be that he is speaking from personal experience, and that he himself knows what it is to be in destitution and want. Moreover, he had himself 'seen the wicked in great power,' and, as the Authorised Version has it, 'spreading himself like the green bay tree' (35). Nevertheless, in spite of all he has seen, in spite of all which he personally may have experienced, this psalmist is certain that all who 'work unrighteousness' 'shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb' (2). The exaltation of the wicked can be but for a moment, for 'yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.'

Here we have neither the unclouded optimism of the twenty-third psalmist, nor the clear statement of the one hundred and second psalmist. These two men of God never seem to have had the slightest occasion to doubt the firmness of the position they so ingenuously maintain. On the other hand, this aged man, the thirty-seventh psalmist, full of grey hairs and a veritable saint of God, is writing because, in his old age, the hard facts of his experience were on the point

of beginning to become too much for him. He had not gone so far as seriously to doubt the adequacy of that clear-cut system which he had accepted all his long life-time, but he had reached the stage when he needed, for his own sake if not for the sake of others, to re-establish his past firm beliefs by asserting that, bay trees or no bay trees, things are as they ought to be. The measure of his uncertainty may be gauged by the rigidness of his dogmatizing and by the extent of his vociferous assertions that still and beyond question rectitude and righteousness go hand in hand with prosperity and peace. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the followers of Jesus all the more bitterly because he was beginning to suspect in his own heart that perhaps his own position was growing less easy to justify, and that it might be after all that they were right and he was wrong. Similarly this psalmist asserts all the more vigorously that he is right, because the first elements of doubt are beginning to creep in.

We remember with joyful affection the village schoolmaster in the village of Oliver Goldsmith's, which once was not deserted, the worthy man of whom it amazed 'the gazing rustics ranged around' that 'one small head could carry all he knew.' It is said of him that 'e'en though beaten he could argue still.' The psalmist wa:

in far worse straits, for the schoolmaster, though beaten, could at least find some sort of basis for argument. Not so the psalmist, for he has no ground at all left on which to argue, except those pre-suppositions with which he originally began. Indeed, he does not argue in this psalm, he keeps on telling them. He repeats it to his contemporaries, he keeps on saying it over and over again. In spite of anything anybody may say—nay, in spite of everything everybody does say, the psalmist holds to his first conviction; whatever the facts he insists upon maintaining his belief, God will see to it that whoever trusts in Him will never in this world be in want.

There was nothing wrong with this man's eyes, and his brains were sound. We cannot say for him that he was following, however honestly, his own crooked vision. He plainly refused to believe his eyes. He was thoroughly awkward about it, and amazingly perverse. But in all his stubbornness he was sublimely perverse, and for this perverseness we owe him our admiration and true applause, and with him every other psalmist who takes up the same attitude. It shows how sound was their religious experience, because, as a matter of truth, if not of fact—as a matter of truth, though the evidence was plain enough almost for a blind man to see, and though every scrap of evidence pointed

directly against them—these psalmists were right. God certainly does stand by the righteous, and the wicked assuredly come to a bad end.

These psalmists did well. The facts they had before them were wrong, for they had not all the evidence. It may be true that half a loaf is better than no bread, though there are many who with a fair amount of justification would take leave to doubt it, but it is certainly true that half the evidence is worse than no evidence at all. The psalmists were right; it was the evidence which was wrong.

The man who refuses to face the facts, or roundly denies that things are as everyone else can see them quite plainly to be, this man is usually the falsest of guides, and is rightly and deservedly rejected by all. For such people, when they grow dangerous either to themselves or to others, we maintain lunatic asylums. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand the hard-headed, matter-of-fact, seeing-is-believing man is the one to follow. But the disconcerting thing about this so-solid world in which we find ourselves is that in the thousandth instance, in the case when it matters most of all, the obvious way is the wrong way, and the lunatic is the sanest man of all. It was not much learning that was making Paul mad, but the madness which is Divine. Sometimes the folly

of man is the wisdom of God, and in order to maintain the real truth we must ridiculously deny the apparent truth. The case of these psalmists is precisely such an instance. In those far-off days, before there was any thought of any real life beyond the grave, and among peoples who had not raised up a race of philosophers, the man who was guided solely by his experience of what he could see would undoubtedly have come to the conclusion that righteousness was folly, and that there was in this world no government by a righteous God. They might hold that there was no righteous God at all, and that the prophets were wholly wrong, or, if they indeed were right, then obviously God was helpless, and of no account whatsoever. Such is the opinion of wicked men, quoted by the tenth psalmist (1-11). They might maintain the power of God is arbitrary, that He treats all men alike whether they be good or bad, and that the only thing to do is to make the best of, and get all the pleasure out of life while we can. Such an attitude was taken by early Greek gnomic poets such as Theognis (*c.* 520 B.C.) in the days before the rise of Socrates and his successors. Or again, they might hold that the man who would prosper in this world, and therefore the only man who would ever prosper at all anywhere (since there was no other world), was the man who had

least scruples about his dealings with his fellows. Let him, therefore, if he think it expedient, draw out his sword and bend his bow, cast down the poor and needy, and slay such as be upright in the way (Ps. xxxvii, 14). All that the psalmist can say is that this wicked man's time is coming, and that God even now is laughing at his presumption and folly. And the reply of the wicked man is that God may continue to laugh if that is His pleasure, for the devices of the wicked continue to prosper, and the perishing of the unrighteous is certainly not yet. And so this prosperous, comfortable man sees no need to worry about religion or to take any account of God. He has all he wants, and, therefore, believes that he has all he needs. From every obvious point of view this type of man was right in those far-off days. Provided he sinned on a large scale his position was unassailable. But he was wrong, obvious as it would be to himself and to others that he was right.

It is exactly at such times, and to meet such situations, that the Lord raises up His prophets, and has been rising early to send them ever since the world was young. The prophet is that one man among the thousand who has an inner certainty which ultimately is independent of the outside world. It is not that he must necessarily be contrary to his fellows, though that is bound

to be the case more often than not. Nor must he necessarily refuse to follow where common sense and sound learning lead.

There was a time when the leading thinker in this country wrote, 'The more discordant, therefore, and incredible the Divine mystery is, the more honour is shown to God in believing it, and the nobler is the victory of faith.' So wrote Bacon in *De Augmentis*. Whether he would have written so to-day is another matter. He was among the first in this country of the heralds of the Great Awakening. Europe was rousing from her long slumber of the Middle Ages, and was finding herself shackled in the chains of a dead Scholasticism, bound in the fetters of the Church. It was the first step of men like Bacon and Hobbes to set men free to think for themselves, and so anxious were they that men should shake themselves free in the realm of what we might now call 'secular knowledge,' that Bacon, for instance, allowed that 'the articles and principles of religion are exempted from the examination of Reason.' He left religion to the Church, and extolled the virtues of blind belief. One of the unsatisfactory features of much of the religion of to-day is the exaltation by far too many of blind feeling and with it a depreciation, conscious or unconscious, of sound learning. Men claim that they

do not wish to say a word against education, and by paying lip service to it, they damn it with faint praise. This has always been the tendency at those times when most of all there has been need for things to be thought out once more from the very foundation. Men have run to cover. It is an easy way out, and a popular one. Never was there more need for a sound theology, and never less inclination among ordinary men and women to school themselves into that discipline of thought which is essential to its production. Leading speakers and many writers apparently desire to create and foster that public opinion which would say that the heart beats the head any day. It is once more a false antithesis which is the cause of so many of our modern woes. It is true that there comes a day when the heart may bring us safely home, whilst the head may leave us still wandering in the desert, but we fall into grave error when we seek so glibly to divide man up into sections, speaking as though mind and heart and will were separate and independent entities, each paramount in its own sphere. It is here indeed that the source of much popular error is to be found. We must recognize once more that Man is One. He is not a creature of mind plus a creature of emotion plus a creature of will, all three loosely bound together into a dubious and none too harmonious

trinity. We all are aware that he is a creature who thinks and feels and wills, but in popular thinking and in much of popular theology we still persist in assuming that between mind and heart there is a warfare in which there is no discharge, and that, to continue in the words of Job, will is the daysman who puts his hand upon them both. It is because we erroneously make this division that so many place reason on the one side and emotion on the other, and suggest that they have no common meeting ground. It is then easy to proceed to the next stage, and to say that since men's hearts grow warm within them when they pray, therefore religion is a matter of the emotions and not of the intellect.

Or, if perchance we avoid this Charybdis of a former generation, we find ourselves ensnared by the Scylla of the present day, and we make man a loosely-tied bundle of primitive impulses, instincts, obsessions, complexes, repressions, sleeping neuroses, and what not else besides. Every age has its own catchword. In the Græco-Roman world it was 'Logos.' Very much nearer our own time it was 'Evolution.' Now it is 'Psychology.' And there is danger here, grave danger, as always when Uncle Toby mounts his hobby-horse. A little psychology is a dangerous thing, and there are lamentably

few who have enough of it, and at the same time enough of other knowledge, to make them safe guides. Some there are whose godly work in this realm has brought light and new hope to thousands, and we have learned to praise God for them. But the average circuit minister finds more neurotic women made worse by worrying about their complexes and the rest than he finds people restored to health by the limited and confused acquaintance with the elements of psychology, which is all the vast majority have been able to attain. One day, we may hope, the world will recover from this last hypnosis, and will realize that psychology is not the Queen of the Sciences, but one of the lowliest of her handmaidens. We may realize then, as we are now realizing in respect of our former 'old man of the sea,' Evolution, that when we have explained how a thing works, we then have to begin on the greater and more important problem, and that is the question as to why it works. Then we will realize that what a man 'feels' is not always what matters most, and that inspiration is something which may also come to men through their brains, and not only to those who try to make their minds a blank. After all, there have been as many souls lost through loose thinking as by loose living. There is a guidance which enables a man to

estimate the value of the evidence which experience gathers, to reject this, and to accept that. The prophet is the man whose guiding light shines brightly in both mind and heart, who has a sure confidence which is independent of the world without. He is the thousandth man, and he is a saviour of the world.

It is almost in the nature of the case that the prophets must be rejected, persecuted, and put to death, since they are the men who, from within and with immediate comprehension, see clearly what other men must take, it may be, long centuries slowly and painfully to learn from bitter experience. The prophet's own people and times will reject him, but later generations will build his tomb and garnish his sepulchre. The Servant of the Lord must be rejected and despised. He will be buried in a dishonoured tomb, but he is bound at last to see of the travail of his soul and to be satisfied.

This thirty-seventh psalmist, like his aged comrade the seventy-first psalmist, was confident in spite of the facts, and was therefore able to endure 'as seeing that which is invisible.' For us the position has changed entirely. We know that material prosperity is far from being everything, though we may not any of us always live up to this which we know. We know, and in our better moments are very sure, that there is a

peace and a joy which is independent of what we may possess. We are agreed that righteousness and material prosperity have not necessarily anything at all to do with each other. We see the righteous and the unrighteous alike prospering; we see both the deserving and the undeserving in sore straits. We are fully aware that more than one good man has died broken-hearted, believing that his whole life's work, as altruistic and as devoted as any man's work could ever be, has gone for naught. We have seen godly men die in a ripe old age, honoured by all and with a goodly harvest of the things of this life. There is no criterion of goodness to be found here. We believe also that the grave is not the end of the story so far as we are concerned, and that the joys of earth, splendid as they can be, are far exceeded by supernal joys in heavenly places. We can look beyond where the psalmist was born generations too early even gropingly to peer.

All this makes a tremendous difference. We have eternity with which to conjure. He had but time, and only some seventy or so years of that. And seventy years is not long, especially since some thirty of them are gone before most of us feel that our feet are planted here with even moderate security. It all means that we are not shut up to his approach. It means that

we can face the facts fairly and honestly. He could not; he had to shut his eyes to most of them. That is one of the differences which the Lord Jesus has made, and it is only in these last days that we are realizing it. The Christian to-day need fear no man. He has a Bible he can defend against any reasonable opponent, and a religion, both of theory and of practice, which he can declare without fear and seek to justify without qualms in any of the market-places where men meet to listen and to question.

We know that God stands by the righteous. To put it at its very minimum, there is a rightness which ensures that the ultimate victory is with goodness, and that one day the Devil and all his angels will be overthrown, never more to rise. Every man believes that, and for the most part seeks to live that way. Life would not be tolerable for half a day unless the vast majority of men and women, unless practically every citizen, believed that it is better to be true than to be false. We English people pride ourselves on our love of fair play. The charge that English cricketers in Australia have used unfair tactics has hurt the average Englishman far more than any of them could ever hurt any Australian batsmen. The majority of men and women in this country to-day may not care two straws for organized religion, and have very little

conscious thought of God at all, but they certainly believe that fair play is right. We tend to condone many offences, but never a breach of the spirit of the game. We are prepared, with what often doubtless proves to be a misplaced generosity, to excuse many offenders, but the man who does not 'play cricket' is without excuse. But does the average Englishman ever ask himself why it is that he believes so wholeheartedly in the necessity of playing the game? It is because he knows in his heart that the Universe is run that way. That is why all our fairy stories have a 'proper ending,' Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Red Riding Hood, and all the rest. The folk-tales of the world are not all like that—the stories, for instance, of the West Coast of Africa, where the tortoise saves himself from ostracism by tricking the lizard, or shows himself to be more full of tricks than even the monkey. The fundamental beliefs of a people are shown in such simple tales. (See C. P. Groves, *Jesus Christ and Primitive Need,* pp. 149 ff.) The African knows that in this life the race does not always go to the strong, but sometimes to the most cunning, and that if he would prosper in this world in spite of the ghosts and the spirits who would harm him, he must adopt cunning artifices. It is because of the background of a terrible fear against which he

has to live his whole life that his folk-tales have taken on the colouring we find in them. Our nursery tales are otherwise. They all assume that the ultimate victory is with the good, however maltreated they may be in the beginning, and with the honest, though they be poor. We believe that fundamentally the Universe is builded on rightness and fair play. There may be an apparent discrepancy between men's acts and their rewards, but we are confident that in the long run Nature is just. To quote from Huxley's famous letter to Charles Kingsley—'I have the firmest belief that the Divine Government (if we may use such a phrase to express the sum of the "customs of matter") is wholly just. The more I know intimately of the lives of other men (to say nothing of my own), the more obvious it is to me that the wicked man does *not* flourish, nor is the righteous punished. . . . The gravitation of sin to sorrow is as certain as that of the earth to the sun, and more so—for the experimental proof of the fact is within reach of us all—nay is before us in all our lives, if we had but the eyes to see it.'[1]

Why should there be a rightness rather than a wrongness? Why should men assume that it is best to be loyal and true? Why not assume

[1] *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, Vol. I, pp. 219-220 Macmilla & Co., by permission of the publishers.

that it is the way of the world to cheat and lie, especially since there are some who seem to make it pay? There is a reason for this deep-rooted conviction of every man that it is better to be an honest man than a knave. We believe that the world is made that way, and, in our hearts, that it was that sort of Being who made it.

This is not easy to prove. There is, as a matter of fact, no completely satisfactory proof of anything; we do not know enough of the facts. We have but a few, a very few, and they are small bricks wherewith to build a tower that shall reach to heaven. Man does his best, and by trusting in goodness hopes that one day it will be plain that he has raised his tower on the rock which cannot be moved. Ultimately here, as in most cases, it is a matter of faith. We build on what experience we have, on what we have found to be true, not only without in the world of things, but within in the promptings of our own hearts. We trust the God we have found in our own experience, and we thank Him that we do not need to see every step of the way in order to walk along it. These psalmists had a sound experience of God. It was so sound that they could trust Him through what to them must have been the impenetrable mystery of human life. The night for them was dark as midnight, yet by their faith they marched forward as by

noonday light. The faith of these psalmists is for us the most important feature of their message.

The mystery is still with us, but for us the darkness is lightened beyond measure, lightened by the glory that shines from Calvary, glowing with the brightness of that resurrection morning. How much more sure, therefore, of the triumph of goodness ought we to be! How much more deep and vigorous our faith in God ought to be! For all our nineteen centuries of Christian tradition, there are some psalmists who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven before us. Their faith will have saved them.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOURCE OF FAITH
(Pss. lxxiii, xxvii, xlii-xliii)

As we have seen, not every psalmist found it easy to accept the Deuteronomic position in all its rigidity. Among those who found difficulties were three who found their solution in the same way. These are the seventy-third and the twenty-seventh psalmists, together with the writer of what now forms Psalms xlii and xliii.

The seventy-third psalmist opens by stating the position as maintained by the Deuteronomists,

> Surely God is good to Israel,
> Even to such as are pure in heart;

but straightway he confesses with what difficulty he himself maintains this point of view. His feet were almost gone; his steps had well nigh slipped. He looks round and on every side he sees the wicked prospering. Everything they could desire was theirs. Not content with their evident prosperity, they must needs mock at the righteous, and boast till heaven and earth are full of the noise of their babel-tongues. Openly they deny the Deuteronomic principles. They

say that very obviously God cannot know whether a man is righteous or not. The psalmist for his part has searched his heart, and has repented of his sin. He has endured the correction of God morning by morning, but still there is no change in the state of affairs. He begins to think that, after all, the wicked and the arrogant must be right, and that the way to happiness and heart's desire is not by observing the commandments of God, but by violence and pride. One thing, however, holds him back, and it is the thought that such speech on his part would be disloyalty to his friends and fellow sufferers. So he goes up to the Temple, and there in the House of God he finds his answer. His faith, which has been shaken, is once more made firm, for there he realizes once more that the end of the wicked is sure. In the midst of all their prosperity they are walking in slippery places, and their destruction is but delayed. Suddenly and overwhelmingly the end will come. All their prosperity will vanish like the figures in a dream when one awakes. The psalmist was very foolish ever to have doubted. It was because he had not realized the mighty power of God. Now he has no doubts whatever. He knows that God will always be with him, and will uphold him. God, more than ever, is all in all to him.

Whom have I in heaven but thee?
And there is none on earth that I desire beside thee.
(Ps. lxxiii, 25.)

Whatever fails, God at least is sure. He is the rock of the psalmist's heart, and his portion for ever. Though all else crumbles, there will still be God.

The twenty-seventh psalmist has reached the same conclusion, and by the same road. He has learned to fear none, because Jehovah is his light and his salvation, and the very strength of his life. Surrounded by evildoers, harassed by war, his confidence is never shaken. There is but one thing he seeks, and that is to dwell in the House of Jehovah all the days of his life. There he can find the pleasantness, the loveliness of Jehovah, and in His Temple can continually be seeking to learn His will. In Jehovah's House there is safety, and confidence, and joy. In the second part of the psalm we find the testing of this robust faith. 'Seek ye my face'; so ran the good word of Jehovah. The psalmist indeed sought His presence, and there he prayed for confidence and help. He prayed that he be not cast off and forsaken. Jehovah is his last hope, for He will lift him up when even his father and his mother have forsaken him. All around him there are adversaries who would do him harm. He lives in a world of false

witnesses and cruel threats, but he retains his steadfast faith in God. To 'one sure hope his spirit clings,' he 'knows that God is good' to the righteous. It is this firm faith alone which keeps him going.

> I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah
> In the land of the living. (Ps. xxvii, 13.)

This psalmist, like the seventy-third psalmist, has been saved by the experience of Jehovah, which he found as he worshipped in the Temple.

The third of this trio is the author of Psalms xlii and xliii. These are found as two psalms in the Hebrew Text, and therefore also in the English Versions. There can be no doubt but that originally they formed one psalm in three stanzas with the refrain,

> Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
> And why art thou disquieted within me?
> Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him,
> Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.
> (Pss. xlii, 5, 11; xliii, 5.)

This psalmist was a priest who once led the festive throng in procession to the House of God (so the Hebrew *eddaddem* in verse 4). He does this no longer, for as he writes he is in exile in 'the land of Jordan and the Hermons' (6). His enemies reproach him, as mockingly they ask him where is his God? He himself,

in his continued sorrow, longs for nothing more than to be able to appear before God once more in the Temple. Those were great days, thinks he, in times gone by, with that happy multitude keeping holy day. The psalmist fears that perhaps God has indeed forgotten him for a while, else why all this distress which has come upon him? But he never loses hope. Still, though far from the Temple, he remembers God. Night by night in prayer and in song he seeks the presence of God, and day by day he realizes afresh that God is full of loving kindness (the word is *chesed,* see p. 19 above). The last stanza, now Psalm xliii, is full of confidence. The psalmist prays that God will vindicate him for his true devotion against a people who are not as pious as they claim to be (xliii, 1), and against a man who is full of villainy and deceit. We have suggested elsewhere (*Studies in the Psalter,* pp. 19-24) that this psalmist was an exiled Korahite, and that he was driven out of Jerusalem by Nehemiah and the latter's supporters during the troublous times in the latter half of the fifth century B.C., but the acceptance of this suggestion is not essential to the understanding of the psalm, though we believe that it throws considerably more light upon this psalmist's experience, and explains many phrases throughout which other-

wise it is not easy to interpret. In any case, the psalmist is confident that God, in His own good time, will lead him back once more to Jerusalem, and that, as in former days, he will be able to offer sacrifices of joy, and with what transports of joy it will be, once more upon the altar. There is no need for despondency or disquietude, for God is faithful and keeps the covenant.

This hope of return, we believe, was realized after some twenty years, but the Korahites never sacrificed again on the altar. They became doorkeepers, but still they rejoiced, for they knew that

> A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; (Ps. lxxxiv, 10.)

and they were very sure, because they had experienced both, that they would each man of them

> . . . rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
> Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Ps. lxxxiv, 10.)

There is no place like the House of God, and no one knows that better than the eighty-fourth psalmist. Now that he is back once more, though in a position of small importance compared with his former eminence as a sacrificing priest (see *Studies in the Psalter,* pp. 37-46), he knows that the Temple is a place of rest and

joy, a veritable haven of refuge and the home of peace.

> Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house,
> And the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young,
> Even thine altars, O Jehovah of Hosts,
> My King, and my God. (Ps. lxxxiv, 3.)

Here are three (or four, if we include the eighty-fourth) psalmists who have found infinite help and consolation in the 'courts of Jehovah.' Their experience is paralleled by that of the writers of the Pilgrim Psalter, Pss. cxx-cxxxiv, those 'psalms of going-up,' probably originally a collection of psalms for the use of pilgrims to the Holy Shrine, but in the time of Our Lord sung at the Feast of Tabernacles, during the night feast by the light of the Harvest Moon. This festival marked the close of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, that night of illumination when there was not a house in Jerusalem which was not lit up by the light of the 'house of water-pouring.' While the Chassidim and the 'men of David' danced in the courtyard below with flaming torches, tossing them high and catching them again while they whirled and leaped in frenzied ecstasy, the Levites stood on the fifteen steps which led down from the Court of Israel to the Court of the Women, and sang these fifteen psalms. Exiled in Meshech

and among the tents of Kedar (cxx), longing for help from beyond the distant hills (cxxi), looking up to the skies for the help that tarried long (cxxiii), in the midst of proud and overwhelming waters (cxxiv), or out of the depths (cxxx), these psalms speak of a devotion and a longing for the Holy City and the House of God, which may have been equalled by those pious Jews of succeeding ages who spend the hard-won savings of a lifetime to pray and mourn at the Wailing Wall, but it certainly has never been surpassed.

The one hundred and twenty-second psalmist rejoices with all his heart in the thought of standing once more within the gates of Jerusalem; he speaks of the gladness wherewith they went in company to the House of Jehovah. Similar sentiments are expressed in Pss. cxxv, cxxviii, cxxxii, cxxxiii, and cxxxiv. The whole of the Pilgrim Psalter is full of the rejoicing of pilgrims and worshippers at the prospect of uniting together in the common worship of Jehovah. Every one of these psalmists had found great joy and strength in the worship of the Sanctuary. It was there that their confidence in God was strengthened and renewed, and for some of them in the dark days that followed, the memory of their experiences in the Temple, and the faith which those experiences engendered, were their

only rock and strong tower against the buffeting of the storms of an alien world. There are indeed rich spiritual experiences which can be found only in the company of kindred souls, though there be but two or three that are met together. These are to be found never, or with marked infrequency, by the individual when he is alone, even though he may feel himself alone with God.

In *Religion in the Making,* Professor A. N. Whitehead has written (p. 6) that 'religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.' Whilst by no means a definition, this statement is sufficiently accurate in that it pierces to the root of personal religion. If we know what a man thinks when he is alone, then we know the man. A man is what he is when he is alone. It is then that he gives rein to his inmost thoughts, for then he need wear no mask. He has no impression to make, no appearance to keep up. This, incidentally, is the reason why people are often on their best behaviour in other people's houses, and at their worst in their own home. What every man thinks when he is alone, that is his religion. It is, at any rate, the thing for which really he lives, his chiefest concern of every day.

> Then said he unto me, son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the House of Israel do in the dark, every man in his chambers of imagery? (Ezek. viii, 12.)

That was their real religion, the five and twenty men with their backs towards the Temple of Jehovah worshipping the rising sun, and the women sitting by the northern gate weeping for Tammuz. For, 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' It is not set phrases which are of most account in revealing the hearts of men. The 'idle words' matter more, for then a man is speaking the 'thoughts of the heart.' Experience teaches us to listen patiently and courteously to all that a man has to say, but to watch even more carefully, though, let us hope, still courteously, the way in which he says it. It is not the actions, concerning which we have had time to deliberate, which are most revealing, but those things which we have to do suddenly and without warning. Most people can decide what they ought to do when they have had time to think the matter out, and many, by the time there is need for action, can muster sufficient strength of will and courage to carry out their considered policy. Immediate rather than deliberate action is the test. Then, in a moment, it is revealed what manner of men we are, who is the coward and who is the hero. The man of action is the man who is in the perpetual state of having made up his mind. He who is not a man of action is what he is because he has never been able to make up his mind. He is

what he does, and that is nothing in particular. Your Christian is the man who, when he suddenly finds himself in an unexpected situation, forthwith, and without having time to consider, acts according to the Mind of Christ. He chooses that way because that is what he is in his solitariness.

It happens on occasion, happily the occasions are rare, though even then too many, that a good man of our acquaintance commits some terrible sin, a matter, say, of the pocket or of the flesh. We wonder whatever has possessed him that he should have done such a thing; we say that he was the last man in the world whom we would have thought would have acted in that particular way. We say that it must have been due to some sudden temptation. We are wrong, though it may be we seek to be charitable. It was no sudden temptation. No man falls suddenly to a new temptation when first it comes his way. That man fell because in the secret places of his own soul he had long since been flirting with the idea. Those were the things he had been drawing on the walls of his chambers of imagery. For months, maybe for years, he had been able to guard himself, but all the while the seeds he was sowing were growing strong with the warmth of his close-keeping. Till one day he forgot to guard

himself, or perhaps one day he found the plant he had been secretly nourishing had grown too strong for his poor restraints. It had at last blossomed into flower, and all men could see the foul weed it had been. It behoves us all to have a care in the matter of the pictures we paint in times of quietness, when we are by ourselves, for 'what the individual does with his own solitariness' is the sort of individual a man is.

The man of God is the man who in his solitariness has thoughts of God; he is the man who communes with God in the quietness of his own soul. Every man needs to be quiet before God, that he may refresh his soul as from the well of the Water of Life. But the quietness must be disciplined, else it becomes but a wandering reverie and may easily do more harm than good. Not every thought which comes into one's head in times of quietness is sent from God, for it has been abundantly proved that though Satan may find plenty of evil for idle hands to do, he can find a very great deal more for empty heads. And even though one may set out definitely to seek the face of God, still strict discipline must be maintained. 'I talk on in the same posture of praying, eyes lifted up, knees bowed down, as though I prayed to God, and if God or His angels should ask me when

I last thought of God in that prayer I cannot tell. Sometimes I find that I had forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it I cannot tell. A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of to-morrow's dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine ear, a light in mine eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera troubles me in my prayer.' So John Donne, a seventeenth-century divine. We need in our prayers to discipline ourselves in order that we may train our hearts and minds not to wander into every bypath of wandering thoughts, until in our quietness we find ourselves definitely seeking and finding the presence of God. This was the steady practice of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Time and time again He slipped away alone to pray, and always at a time of crisis, before the preaching in Galilee, again in Galilee when all men were speaking well of Him, when they tried to take Him by force to make Him King, at Cæsarea Philippi, and last of all in the Garden. And there are many of us who think, in our presumption and folly, that we have less need to pray than He. Or, perhaps the reason is simpler still; it may be that we just do not think about it at all. Let no man decry the value, and indeed the necessity, of making time to be solitary with God.

At the same time this does not mean that a

man must perforce make himself a solitary if he would find God. The man who best finds God when he is alone is the man who, like the forty-second psalmist, has first found Him in the Temple in the company of fellow-worshippers. Nothing can take the place of the corporate worship of Christian people. When Our Lord bade His disciples and us to enter into our inner chamber, and 'having shut the door, pray to your Heavenly Father who is in secret,' He was not offering an alternative to the communal worship in the Temple. He meant it as a better way than standing at the corners of the streets to be seen of men, and for a pretence making long prayers. In the first days it was when men were in communion together that they received the gift of Holy Spirit. 'They were all with one accord in one place' (Acts ii, 1, A.V.), and to them the blessing came, 'Power from on high.'

It has been so all down the years in the experience of the Church. Men have received new power and inspiration from their worship together, a power and an inspiration which they could never otherwise have received. The psychologists say 'mass psychology' and 'herd instinct.' Quite so, but in saying that the most that they have done is to have described it and explained the working. They have not explained

it away. There is a reason for this inspiration which comes to us thus, and a reason why it should come thus. It is the way we are made; and the fact that at long last we are beginning to understand something of the way in which we are made is no reason why we should uproot all the ancient landmarks, but all the more reason why we should thank God that we have found them and recognized them as such, that by His Grace they may now the more speedily lead us Home. Knowledge of the way in which our race has been made is enforcing in these days the soundness of those instinctive impulses which we feel in our hearts, and not least among them is this urge to get together. Spiritually we are still sheep, and perhaps always will be. Just as a flock of sheep find warmth in the cold of winter by huddling together, so we find spiritual warmth when we are all of one accord in one place. And we still need a Shepherd, though many of us never find that out until we are lost in the wilds, nor even then until we know that we are lost—which is not quite the same thing.

There was once a youth, newly left home for the first time, going on a long journey to live with his mother's people. And in his journey night came to him at a place where huge boulders were piled up, terracing the hillside. He slept there with a stone for his pillow, and dreamed

of a ladder set up on earth to heaven. He saw visions of God, angels ascending and descending, and at the top God Himself on His heavenly throne. In the morning, like the eighty survivors of the good ship *Rose* under the giant ceiba-tree behind La Guayra on the Spanish Main, he 'swore a mighty oath, and kept that oath like a man,' that, if God prospered him in all his way, then the God of Bethel would be his god for life. He called the name of the place Bethel, because Bethel means 'House of God.' Years after, when most of his sons were grown up, Jacob went back to Bethel. It was at a time of great anxiety, for Simeon and Levi had most treacherously attacked Shechem, and Jacob feared reprisals from the Canaanites. It may be that his fears were justified in the result (Gen. xlix, 5-7), but in any case he did well to return to Bethel, where first he had seen visions of God. The old associations were revived in his heart and mind, and the old confidence restored. And so, for Jacob, for the Hebrews of later days who worshipped at Bethel, as they worshipped at any holy shrine in Palestine because one of the patriarchs spake there with Jehovah, and for us also, Bethel stands for the place where God meets with men. The place where our fathers met with God is the place where we also can find Him, for the associations

and the traditions of the places are our aids. All our Bethels, from wayside country chapels to city churches and even to 'de big Bethel' in Atlanta, Georgia, where coloured Christians gather by thousands to sing their hymns and their own spiritual songs, all our Bethels are each one a means of grace. As before, the psychologist has an explanation—laws of association, and so forth. And once again, the fact that we are finding out the way in which the human mind works, and can give it a name, is all the more reason why we should take advantage of our increasing knowledge of the way, that we may the more surely reach the goal at the end of it.

There is another phase of religious experience which emerges in the faith of these three psalmists. We find it in the seventy-third psalmist,

> Whom have I in heaven but thee? (Ps. lxxiii, 25.)

and again, in the twenty-seventh psalmist,

> I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah,
> In the land of the living. (Ps. xxvii, 13.)

The forty-second psalmist also has learned that he must centre all his hopes in God. It is God's light and truth alone, which can, and please God will, lead him to the Holy Hill and to His Tabernacles. There was nothing else to which

these devout men could cling, except only their firm faith in God. Like the thirty-seventh psalmist, they had nothing to uphold them except this one thing. He was certain that God was just, and equally certain that God was love. To these two facts he clings though they threatened to tear him asunder. He had nothing else to do but cling to both; it was as if below was death in a shark-infested sea. 'None in heaven but God,' as the seventy-third psalmist cries. 'There is none other that fightest for us, but only Thou, O God,' as the response in the Evening Service in the Book of Common Prayer puts it.

Every one perhaps does not reach this last extremity, when a man is faced starkly with two alternatives, either to hold on to God, a God he cannot see and can only very partially understand, or else to drown. This is the point when a man has realized that there is nothing else, nothing before him but a light he can only dimly see, often overclouded and invisible for long stretches of time, and everywhere else, darkness, gross darkness, black as Egypt's night. It is the dark winter of the soul. There are some who come to God with joyful enthusiasm, full of the freshness of the morning and with glad, unclouded eyes. They believe with ardour and with joy. Their rapture is God's perfect gift to

stainless souls. But there are others whose way is hard. They come to God because they must, because they have realized that there is no other way. They have tried all other ways, and they bear upon their bodies the scars of the thickets through which they have passed, and all the slime of miry places. They come at last to the River of the Water of Life only when they have been to all other cisterns, and have found them broken. He is the only Rock in a weary land, the only Shelter from the pitiless heat of a scorching sun.

These psalmists may not have reached that last extremity, but they have been so near to disaster as to realize how desperately they must cling to God if they would be saved from terrors and disillusions which are worse than death itself. They know that there is no other way. They have realized their utter helplessness apart from God, and the complete inadequacy of all things else. The temper of the last fifty years or so has been wholly contrary to this, and in no respect is the spirit of our age more at variance with the spirit of these psalmists. The amazing advances we have made in scientific knowledge and in the application of that knowledge to the details of the every-day life, have beguiled us into assuming that man indeed is the measure of all things. We have come to the conclusion

that we can build a road anywhere. So we can, every road except only one road, and that is the road to God. We have come to believe that we can build any tower, and so we can, except only the tower that shall reach to Heaven. We have excluded God from the ordinary affairs of man just as surely and as certainly as the later Jews did, though by a curiously contrary process. The Jews so emphasized the holiness, and to them that meant the separateness, of Jehovah that they fixed a great gulf between God and man, and necessity drove them to people this gulf with tier upon tier of angelic beings, or with His Word, through which alone He dealt with men and all things earthy. Whereas the Jews cut God out from ordinary affairs by insisting that man must for ever belong to the earth, we have filled the whole universe with Man. We have sought a rational explanation for every phenomenon, and whilst in this we have done well, we have not done well when we have tended to assume that if we cannot now provide the required explanation, then there is no rational explanation at all. We have been so determined to 'naturalize' the universe that whatever we cannot explain we have labelled 'supernatural.' Then we have proceeded to assume that 'supernatural' means both 'super-human' and 'super-rational.' We need to

remember, as indeed Hosea insisted long ago, that He 'is God and not Man,' but let us also remember, as Hosea further said, that He still is 'in the midst of' us. The Barthian emphasis was needed, but if, because of it, we are going to continue to take what we can understand, call that 'rational,' and then proceed to equate it with both 'human' and 'natural,' our last state may well be worse than our first. There cannot be anything in God's world either super-rational or supernatural, but there can very easily be a great deal that is super-human.

The present-day revolt from reason in religious and theological circles is the outcome of the over-weening confidence in the powers of man, fostered by the prosperity of the late Victorian and the Edwardian eras, and encouraged by man's success in unfolding one by one the secrets of the universes. Again, we must remember that there is disaster in 'either . . . or . . . ,' and that truth lies in 'both . . . and . . . .' Those who rightly insist on the essential place of the superhuman in religion do us grave dis-service when their enthusiasm carries them on to set up a standard for the super-rational against the rational. A standard set up for safety may be the first step in flight and disaster. The Hebrew word for 'standard' is *nes,* and the word for

'flee' is *nus*. The assonance is used with effect by the sixtieth psalmist,

> Thou hast set up a standard for those who fear thee,
> (Only) for fleeing . . . (Ps. lx, 4 [Hebrew Text].)

History has a habit of repeating itself. If we can realize once again, as our fathers did, that all we have is by God's grace and not by our merit, whilst at the same time we remember that God by His grace has given us minds to use and to search out His wondrous ways, then once again our feet will be walking in the way of peace. It may be that the world must still go on, and that men and women must still continue, quite satisfied that we can work out our own destiny and that we are sufficient for all things in heaven and on earth, until at last we realize the grisly truth—that man is not sufficient in himself for any thing, and with it the saving truth that he does depend, and can depend, on God for every breath he draws. When we have realized, as these psalmists did, that there is no way other than this way, then, and not until then, will we have their faith and their confidence.

There are others also who come to God because they must. They come, however, not primarily because of some deep emotional need as these others, but because of a desperate

intellectual need. We are driven to God ultimately because we must make sense of things. Every man is convinced of this latter, and realizes, if he ever stops to think of it, that life on this earth would be impossible on any other basis. Otherwise this universe would be one gigantic Bedlam. Either things make sense or the world is mad. And not even a madman could live in a mad world.

It is this necessity of making sense of things which leads us to disregard the apparent meaning of some of our experiences. We see, for instance, the harvest moon to be quite obviously bigger than any other full moon. That indisputably is the evidence of our eyes. We can, therefore, say that the harvest moon is actually bigger than any other moon, that clearly it swells for that particular month, and returns to its normal size for other months. For evidence, we can tell a man to use his own eyes. But eyes or no eyes, if we say this, we will be wrong, because it does not make sense. We are driven to say that the increased size of the moon is apparent, and not actual, and that it is due to some strange optical illusion.

We might say, similarly, that the god of this world, the god who created and formed this world, is a god of chance. We might produce any number of instances which can apparently

be explained on this basis in so far as it provides any explanation at all. But whilst we may be able to make sense of quite a number of our experiences on this basis, providing actually an explanation which itself is an admission that we have no explanation at all, there are many happenings of which we cannot make sense this way. Something else has been at work other than blind chance. It is the order which has to be explained, not the apparent disorder. Paley's watch still ticks merrily away. How can you have a watch without a watch-maker? And, in any case, the attitude of every man to this universe in which he lives is that he can trust the universe to behave itself reasonably well. We conduct our lives on the assumption that the world is orderly, and that disorderly conduct on the part of the earth is the exception rather than the rule. The disorders are freaks in that they are contrary to the common run, though not contrary, we believe, to every run. We trust that we are sensible folk, and we realize that sensible people will live in this way in such a world as this. There is no other way.

And so we build up the general theistic position, on the ground that we can make more sense of the universe this way than in any other way. This order must have been designed. Nobody ever found order by accident, except

an accidental order, and that is merely another form of disorder. What designed it? Nay, Who designed it?

Further, the Christian claims that it is possible, given the revelation through Jesus Christ Our Lord, and all the evidence then and since which hangs on that, to build up by truly rational principles the Christian position. We believe that unless a man begins, as some moderns do, by cutting out religion as irrational, he is bound to arrive at the Christian position as making more harmony out of the whole gamut of human experience than anything else. There still are experiences like that of the harvest moon, experiences which ordinary people are bound to admit they find difficult to fit in, but Christians maintain that in spite of all those problems which are so difficult to solve, the main problem, for instance, of this little book, there yet is more sense in the Christian position than any other, and that the Christian is the greatest and truest rationalist of them all.

CHAPTER V

THE GRACE OF GOD

(*Pss. lxxviii, ciii, cvi, cxvi, cxxx, cxxxix.*)

THE majority of the psalmists who find difficulties in the strict application of the Deuteronomic principle take the attitude that Jehovah has done no more than He ought to have done. In some cases, as we have seen, they are somewhat doubtful as to whether He has done even as much as that. They allege that He has neglected Israel, and that He has not rewarded them according to their deserving. Whatever the explanation or the need (see p. 51 above), either Israel's righteousness has gone unrewarded or she has already received more than sufficient punishment for her lapses from the covenant obligations.

There are six psalmists who take exactly the opposite attitude, the seventy-eighth, the one hundred and third, the one hundred and sixth, the one hundred and sixteenth, the one hundred and thirtieth, and the one hundred and thirty-ninth. They do not agree that Jehovah has been too hard upon Israel. On the contrary, He has been far more lenient than they have

deserved. The experience of these psalmists is that the Deuteronomic principle of exact retribution in this life is unsound, not, however, because the righteous receive more than their proper share of woe, but rather because they have received very much less tribulation than they have deserved. Neither party, as a matter of fact, has stood by the covenant. Israel has sinned, contrary to the agreement, and Jehovah has not inflicted the punishment which was laid down. Another factor has been introduced from the Godward side. The New Testament calls it Grace.

The seventy-eighth psalmist reviews the days of the past in the true Deuteronomic style. He opens his mouth in a parable; he utters dark sayings of olden time. He unfolds a 'mystery,' in the sense in which St. Paul speaks of the passage from Gen. ii, 24 (quoting from the Septuagint), 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh.' This ancient saying is 'a great mystery' (Eph. v, 32), that is, there has always been in it a hidden meaning of great import, and not till now has this been revealed. So also the psalmist unfolds the hidden meaning of the story of his people. It is the story throughout of the strength of Jehovah and the wondrous deeds which He has

done. It has been long established in Israel as a law and a testimony that this story should be told to every generation, handed down from age to age,

> That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born;
> Who should arise and tell them to their children; (Ps. lxxviii, 6.)

and the object and aim of it all was

> That they might set their hope in God,
> And not forget the works of God,
> But keep his commandments. (Ps. lxxviii, 7.)

For their fathers had been stubborn and rebellious; they did not set their hearts aright, and their spirit had not been steadfast with God. In spite of all the wondrous deeds of salvation, still they had not been faithful to Him—cleaving the sea for dry land or cleaving the rock for water, the bread of the mighty from heaven and flesh from earth to the full, wonders in Egypt and guidance through the desert, till at last He had driven out the nations from before them and had allotted to them an inheritance by line. They turned back in the day of battle; they refused to keep their covenant with Him; they did not walk in His law. Even though they repented when Moses sent the Levites through

the camp, it was but feigningly. Still they were unfaithful, but

> He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity,
> and destroyed them not.
> Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
> And did not stir up all his wrath.
> And he remembered that they were but flesh;
> A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. (Ps. lxxviii, 38 f.)

So the story continues. He gave them Canaan, and drove out their enemies, but still they provoked Him with their idolatries. God therefore afflicted them again, and Ephraim at last paid the price long overdue, though still He chose and extended His favour to the tribe of Judah.

In Psalm ciii, there are verses which have been a consolation to many.

> Jehovah is full of compassion and gracious,
> Slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.
> He will not always chide:
> Nor will he keep his anger for ever.
> He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
> Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
> For as the heaven is high above the earth,
> So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
> As far as the east is from the west,
> So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
> Like as a father pitieth his children,
> So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.
> For he knoweth our frame,
> He remembereth that we are dust. (Ps. ciii, 8-14.)

The psalmist is not thinking, it should be remembered, of a general Providence towards all mankind. Here the mercy of Jehovah is

> . . . to such as keep his covenant,
> And to those that remember his precepts to do them. (18.)

It extends to those who are within the covenant, even though they may not always have remembered.

That post-exilic psalmist, the one hundred and sixth, also writes of the graciousness of Jehovah. He has the same story to tell as the seventy-eighth psalmist. He, too, speaks of the continued waywardness of Jehovah's people. Even at the Red Sea Jehovah saved them, not because they deserved it, but for His Name's sake. Once Moses stood in the breach (23) to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them, and yet again, at Meribah, it went ill with Moses for their sakes (32).

> Many times did he deliver them;
> But they were rebellious in their counsel,
> And were brought low in their iniquity.
> Nevertheless he regarded their distress,
> When he heard their cry:
> And he remembered for them his covenant,
> And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
> He made them also to be pitied
> Of all those that carried them captive. (Ps. cvi, 43-46.)

That Jehovah had dealt bountifully with Israel is the testimony of the one hundred and sixteenth psalmist also. He himself found trouble and sorrow, and was nigh to death. But Jehovah heard his voice and supplication. He inclined His ear, and therefore the psalmist will praise Him as long as he has life.

This attitude reaches its fullest expression in the one hundred and thirtieth psalm.

> If thou, Jah, shouldest mark iniquities,
> O Lord, who shall stand?
> But there is forgiveness in thee,
> That thou mayest be feared . . .
> O Israel, hope in Jehovah;
> For with Jehovah there is mercy,
> And with him is plenteous redemption. (Ps. cxxx, 3, 4, 7.)

Righteousness and that loving kindness which is within the covenant do not include all that there is to be said about God. There was, these psalmists were beginning to see, something in the old idea of favouritism, after all. God does give good to those who have not deserved it, otherwise no one would receive any good at all. He is no huckster that He should demand pound for pound, and eye for eye. There is something else in God. He is a pardoning God, for never has Jehovah gone to the last extremity of His rights in His dealings with His people Israel.

In the end He remembers that we are but dust, and He withholds the full power of His hand.

Jehovah has always loved Israel with a love that is greater than Israel could ever understand. This over-flowing love had been implicit in the prophetic teaching ever since the days of Hosea. But with these psalmists we have a conception of sin which throws into high relief the super-abounding graciousness of God. It develops ultimately into the acknowledgement that if ever we are to be saved it will not be by our own efforts, nor because of our deserts, it will be by the wonderful grace of God.

It is precisely here that the Deuteronomic system goes astray. It makes salvation to be in the last resort of works, and not of grace through faith. This is the discovery of these particular psalmists. We have forgotten what these psalmists have taught, and therein chiefly lies our modern peril. For this reason the world is growing grey to-day. It is not because of the breath of any pale Galilean. The Lord Jesus was no pale and wan masochistic. His Gospel was of life, and He came that men might have it abundantly, rich and full and free, far richer and fuller and freer than even the most modern humanist has ever dreamed. There never was any pale Galilean, or, if there was, his name was not Jesus of Nazareth. We need

Paul to rise from the dead and again to fight the battle for faith against works.

This distinction between salvation by faith and salvation by works goes back beyond Paul to the Lord Himself. It is brought out very clearly in the Gospel according to St. Luke, particularly in such stories as that of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple. The Pharisee thanked his God that he was not as other men, and proceeded to retail the list of the things which he had done—salvation by works. The Publican acknowledged that he was a sinner, and St. Luke leaves us in no doubt as to which went home the better man. We tend still to be like the Pharisee and to think of religion in terms of deeds with their corresponding rewards. We turn religion into morality, and make it for the most part a matter of conduct. That was what the Pharisee did. He did what was commanded, and he said to himself, 'That puts me right with God.' And that was precisely where he was wrong. The whole point is that it is not necessarily doing certain things that puts a man right with God. There is something else involved.

It is without doubt a meritorious act to give of our substance to feed the poor and to help all who are in need. Men say that it is a Christlike thing to do. Perhaps it is, but in the thirteenth

chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul reminds us that though we give all our goods to feed the poor, yet that in itself does not necessarily put us right with God. Or again, we may be ready to do everything to help our fellows, we may devote our whole lives to their service, but though we talk continuously of social service, and act up to every word we say, though we give our bodies to be burned, yet not even that necessarily puts us right with God. Christianity is more than these things, important though they be, nor must they ever, as easily they may, become a substitute for religion. The modern growth of week-day activities in the Churches is to be commended on all hands; for far too long the Churches have fostered the idea that there should be a marked line between the sacred and the profane, and have regarded things as wicked which are not in the least so. But week-day activities can, and on occasion do, become the chief activities of a Church. Then the tail is wagging the dog, and every so-called 'institutional Church' would do well to examine itself and take stock to see whether to any extent institutions have taken the place of real and vital religion.

We would do well to face the question fairly. A man gives his life for his fellows, in peace or in war. How far is his sacrifice comparable

with that of the Lord Jesus Christ? We have, these last sixteen years and more, been most desirous of comforting all who have suffered bereavement in the Great War. We have done well, for there is no sorrow harder to bear than for the sons of our hearts to be cut off in the blossoming of their days, just when all our hopes and prayers for them are on the point of being realized. But at the same time, we ultimately do the bereaved ones no service, and we certainly do the cause of religion a great deal of harm, when we allow our true and deep-felt sympathy to trap us into loose sayings and sentiments concerning the death of the Lord Jesus. Every sacrifice of man for his fellows is part of the sufferings that save the world, especially if it brings home to men the inevitable result of all their folly and their sin. At the same time the Death of the Sinless One, of the Holy Child of God, is different, just as God always is different from man.

Let us always remember also that deeds are not enough with God, however good and desirable they may be. There is, as St. Paul was never tired of saying, there is no salvation through works. Getting right with God is not accomplished only by doing, however much it may be that we do. It is accomplished by being. This 'being,' moreover, is not something that happens

outside where all the world can see; it is something that happens inside where no one can see, none, that is, but God. That is why it matters not at all whether a man's nose be hooked or flat or straight, whether he be Jew, or Negro, or Aryan. We are all alike inside, whatever the shape of our noses may be; we have hearts that can love, selfs that can sin, souls that need to be saved.

But the matter is not, of course, wholly inside, though all the mainsprings of it are. The difference shows itself outside in an over-plus, in doing more than is required, the other cheek, the second mile. Consider, for instance, the ten lepers who came to Jesus to be healed. Luke tells us that they all obeyed the command to go and show themselves to the priest. They did what was required of them, but one of them, the Samaritan above all, did more than was required. He came back to say 'Thank you.' There was no need for him to do this. The others had done all they had been told to do. He did more. He came back because it was not his body only that had been cleansed; his heart had been changed also. Something had happened to him inside; it showed itself outside in the over-plus, in doing more than was required.

It is true that Christianity stands for a certain standard of conduct. When we say, 'If you are

a Christian, you will lead a good life,' we are sound enough in the faith, for a good life has been a test of Christianity since the earliest days, and of Judaism before it. In the General Epistle of James we have this insistence on the importance of good conduct, a passage which, incidentally, has nothing at all to do with salvation by works as against by faith. Unless, says he, your profession of belief shows itself in an honest and sincere effort to live a good life, then your profession is worse than useless. We all need to be sure that our works are good. We have a grave responsibility in this respect to all who are out of the way, and indeed to those who are but learners in the way. There is no greater stumbling block to many than to hear a man say one thing and to see him doing another.

But when we turn the saying round and say 'If you lead a good life then you are a Christian,' then is the time when we may find ourselves in serious error. There has been far too great a tendency towards this kind of thing in recent years. Perhaps it has always been so, but that makes it none the more desirable. Every religion worthy of the name of religion demands a good life. That in itself is not the prerogative of Christianity. There was a time when we had a double test. Not only had a man to turn

from any evil ways he might have followed, but he had also to give evidence of what our fathers called the 'Power of the Spirit.' The tendency has been to be content with the test of conduct, with the result that the power of the Spirit to-day is to a large extent a survival from days that are past. This is all the more a matter for tears since those sects which insist most vigorously upon some manifestation of the power of the Spirit are almost invariably those which are most out of touch with modern thought and as a result this whole phase of the Christian life has fallen into disrepute. It is of no account that Christianity should fall into disrepute when its exponents are living that life to the full, but it is a serious matter when the criticism is deserved. Further, in practice, the reduced emphasis on the power of the Spirit has meant a tendency towards a reduced emphasis on conduct, till we are drifting into the position when we make decent living an equivalent for Christian living. For very many folk to-day Christianity is a system of conduct, nothing more.

There was a time when in this country the general level of conduct was considerably lower than it is to-day. It was more easy to draw a clear line of demarcation between the sheep and the goats. All the world was like the little

girl of a generation ago, who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead. The good were very, very good, and the bad were horrid. Things are different now. The vast majority of people in this country live decent, respectable lives. We meet them by the score in bus and train and tram. Those who swerve from the paths of decency are execrated equally by those who make no profession of religion as by those who do. There never was a time when generous sympathy and kindness and service were more freely rendered than they are to-day. Even in these times, when large parts of the country are living on a standard not far removed from the poverty line, and in some cases below it, the response to an appeal which touches the hearts of the masses can be so whole-hearted as to be embarrassing. There can be no doubt that the lifting of the general standard during the last hundred years is due in large measure to the work of the Christian Churches of this country, especially since the rise of the Sunday schools.

We have every reason to be proud of the work of the Churches in this general way, as well as in the more particular spheres of education and temperance reform. After all, the pioneers of the present temperance movement were Christian men, and whilst there have been good

schools in this country for hundreds of years, yet these were for the few, and it was Christian men and Christian women who just over a hundred years ago first gathered the boys and the girls of the poor off the streets and taught them to read and to write. It may have taken the Christian Church a long time to see what is the mind of God on these and other matters, particularly in regard to the slave trade a hundred years ago and in regard to war to-day, but it should always be remembered the Church did see the anomalies first, and, generally speaking, has led the way. Those who blame the Church for not taking action are often the first to tell the Church to mind its own business when it does seek to take action. Criticisms of the Church have, as a general rule, been forthcoming only when there have been elements within the Church who have seen that there was need for criticism, and have already set about seeking to persuade their fellows to the new point of view. In any case, however, and to whomsoever in chief the credit may be due, it is patent to all that the general level of conduct has risen tremendously.

Our chief danger to-day as Churches is lest we should suffer the fate of the Liberal Party. The trouble with the old Liberal Party is not that it has failed, but rather that it has succeeded.

This becomes clear when we consider the programme of the party in the days when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister, the beginning of that long period of Liberal administration which lasted until the formation of the first Coalition Government. The social programme of those days has now to a large extent been carried out by one party or another, and what little may remain is recognized by all as being in general the basis on which every social reformer must build. In the same way the Christian standard of conduct, in so far as it concerns our attitude to our fellows, is accepted by a vast majority of people as being at least good and desirable. If, then, our Christianity is merely a programme of good works, then the work of the Christian Churches has in large measure been accomplished—unless, as one actually does hear Church-people say, our main task is to keep the standard up. Here, we ourselves most firmly believe, is the chief reason why many most excellent people have no use for organized religion. They do not see the slightest need for the Churches. They themselves live quite respectable lives, lives marked by fair dealing and, in many cases, of outstanding generosity. It is an entirely logical attitude which they take. If that, indeed, is all the Churches stand for, then the sooner we use our

premises for more advanced social work the better it will be.

There are many inside the Churches who know that all these truly estimable people are wrong, and that they are wrong in their conclusion because they are wrong in their major premise. We know, of a surety, that Christianity stands for more than a system of conduct; indeed, it stands for a very great deal more. It may be our fault that other people know us no better, it may be that they are much nearer the truth than we think, but in any case the remedy is plain, and it is in our hands. The immediate business of all professing Christians is to show all men that Christianity is more than doing things, that it involves being something. We must show that primarily it involves a definite relation towards God, and after that—not before, but after that—a definite relation to our fellowmen. It is a movement of God, and not an institution of man; in fact, if religion should be defined as man's search for God, then Christianity is in essence the negation of religion, for it is the story primarily of God's search for man, and God's finding man. It is a matter of the heart and not of the hands only. For salvation is not of works, but of faith. This 'faith' involves a personal surrender to God, and an ever-growing love for Him. The Christian

then loves his neighbour, not because of any sentimental sympathy for him in all our common woes, still less because we are being slowly driven that way by sheer economic necessity, but first and foremost because he loves God, loves Him with a love that is stronger than death, and loving Him, he loves his neighbour also. The early Christians, and therefore the New Testament, had a word for the love which a Christian alone shows, and that word is *agape*. It is a distinctly Christian virtue. New Testament Greek has three words for love. Properly speaking, *eros* is the love with which you love your wife; *phile* is the love with which you love your friend and your neighbour; *agape* is the love with which you love the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and loving Him thus, you love your neighbour also with that same love. It will be seen, therefore, that philanthropy is sub-Christian, and that in order accurately to describe the corresponding attitude of the Christian to his fellows we have to invent the word 'agapanthropy.'

All this is outside the Deuteronomic stream. It is true that the opening words of the Shema are 'Hear ye, O Israel, the LORD your God is one LORD, and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy might' (Deut. vi, 4 f.), and

that these words have formed the kernel of Christianity these nineteen hundred years, and of Judaism before that. Yet in Deuteronomy it is always love within the covenant, and always there is involved the Deuteronomic system of rewards and punishments. The Christian man needs no rewards for loving God, as many of the descendants of the Deuteronomists themselves have seen. It is the Christian man's delight to do the things of God, the things that are well pleasing to Him. He is the man who finds true liberty; it is the liberty of the sons of God.

At the back of these regrettable tendencies is a still more serious trouble. It is essentially involved in the point of view of these particular psalmists. There is dire peril in this talk of rewards and punishments. Most of it, in these days, is in relation to life beyond the grave. Not only do many people still think of Heaven as a place, though that is unavoidable if we are ever to try to picture it at all, but they go farther and think of it as a place where righteousness is rewarded. In practice they are still good Deuteronomists, except that they have surpassed them in being able to give the system more scope. The supposition is that if things have not been put right in this world then they will certainly be put right in the next. Heaven is

the reward of the righteous, and Hell the punishment of the wicked.

There must be some sort of heaven in every religion, otherwise that religion is dead before it is born. The difference between one religion and another lies in the quality of the heaven that it offers, and in the measure of certainty that what is promised can be fulfilled. We might very easily do worse than judge every religion by its heaven, and it is certainly a tolerably sound principle to estimate the worth of a Christian's religion by the kind of heaven for which he hopes. Heaven to a very great number, perhaps to the majority, of Christian people is the guarantee of rewards. In that case heaven must be full of unprofitable servants, those who have done what it is their duty to do.

On the contrary, heaven is not the reward of right action. It should be regarded rather as a result. It is high time we left behind us the idea of heaven as the accumulated profits of a good life. When we begin to realize that the idea of rewards is at its highest but 'a schoolmaster to lead us' towards man's estate, and at its worst an invention of the Devil, then we shall be able to start to solve the age-long problems of pain, and sorrow, and death. The chief difficulty in the minds of men in respect of these experiences is the deeply rooted association of all the

happenings in life with the idea of rewards and punishments. We ourselves would even go so far as to deprecate the giving of rewards to children, for our experience is that children do not think of prizes until grown-ups put the idea into their heads. We have known definite instances of children who delighted in Sunday school for its own sake in the day when they were fortunate enough to attend a Sunday school which gave no prizes for attendance, but who now attend Sunday school in order to get a prize. We have known children who have at one time enjoyed races and sports for the fun of running and the sheer joy of the game because they have been fortunate enough to attend day schools where any prizes which were given were purely nominal, but now they have become 'pot-hunters,' not only in school-days, but for all their adult lives. Children, we ourselves are very sure, need no incentive of prizes if only their interest is gained, and for our part we regard the excuse that we have to give Sunday-school prizes to get the children there as a confession of failure. The Christian needs no reward for loving God, and we ourselves believe sufficiently in the soundness of human nature as to hold, from our own experience, that children would grow up far better Christians if only grown-ups would leave them

alone on this question of prizes and rewards. It certainly is a sublime object to 'let the punishment fit the crime,' but children naturally find a fitting 'reward' in the very doing itself. 'Whatsoever is more than' this, may easily be 'of evil.'

Ultimately, whether we think in terms of results or rewards depends on the way in which we think of God working in His world. So long as we think of God chiefly as outside His world, and able to work in it only by putting His arm through the sky, then we are bound to think in terms of rewards. We have His commands before us; He laid them down before the world began; and He has made plain for us the way through a world which is alien to Him. When we triumph, either in our own strength or by means of considerable help and encouragement from Him, then we are rewarded by God *from outside* the universe. If, on the other hand, we think of God as immanent in His world, and not transcendent in that space-sense in which so many apparently imagine Him to be; if we conceive of Him as working from inside His creation rather than from outside it, then we can the more easily think in terms of results. God has made the world; God, in fact, is making the world, so that, now or hereafter, here or elsewhere, the necessary result of goodness is happiness, and the necessary

result of wickedness is unhappiness. The more we realize that the doing of a good deed brings its own satisfaction with it, and that this satisfaction can provide a far deeper joy than any reward that others can supply, the closer we shall find ourselves to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Himself. He sought no reward, but only to do the Will of His Father in Heaven. He loved God. When we love God with all our heart and soul and might, then it will be our chiefest delight to do the things that are well pleasing to Him. We will never be able to do enough, and we will never think we are accomplishing the over-plus. As soon as a man begins to wonder whether he has done enough, whether it be for wife or parents or family or God, then he may be sure that love is growing cold. God, at any rate, has never done enough for man, though He certainly has done far more than man has deserved.

If heaven has anything at all to do with salvation, then it is achieved by faith and not by works. Indeed, it is extremely doubtful if it is ever good to think to the least degree of heaven in connexion with good works. No man can ever do enough of good works to ensure his place in heaven. Presumably men think of a reward for the Christian life because they are of the opinion that they themselves deserve

such a reward. The saints have never been so sure as that. Even the Apostle Paul himself, the apostle of Grace, feared lest after all he himself might be a castaway.

There can be but one reason for a man thinking that he himself deserves, or even by grace may come to deserve, heaven. He has a limited and an inadequate sense of sin. A contributory cause doubtless is that the common run of sins is decent and respectable rather than foul and filthy. They are dingy instead of black. For that reason they are the less easily noticed, and growing dingier by degrees, they escape our notice when they have become black. But the emphasis on works itself increases its own danger, for the tendency is to emphasize actual deeds as against intentions. We ought, therefore, to say that this age has a tolerably clear understanding of what sins are, but an inadequate appreciation of what sin is. Sin is the state of that man whose thoughts and desires are evil, even though he may never have done a work other than what men call 'good.'

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy Holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our great advances in all branches of knowledge have obscured for us the fact that there is in every respect a great gap between man and God. We quote Robert Bridges' *Laus Deo.*[1]

> Let praise devote thy work, and skill employ
> Thy whole mind, and thy heart be lost in joy.
> Well-doing bringeth pride, this constant thought
> Humility, that thy best done is nought.
> Man doeth nothing well, be it great or small,
> Save to praise God; but that hath saved all:
> For God requires no more than thou hast done,
> And takes thy work to bless it for His own.

There is yet another way in which the neglect of the power of the Spirit has affected our modern Christianity. This is in the matter of the universal Fatherhood of God.

Here there is latterly great confusion of thought and it goes hand in hand with the confusion which would take the ordinary talk of the universal Brotherhood of Man to be what is involved in the Christian idea of the Brotherhood of Man. There is a brotherhood which must be obvious to all thinking men. A man need not be a Christian in order to realize that all the world is bound together in one bundle. Men are bound to recognize that they are brothers, and would do so, even if no man

[1] From *The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1931, by permission of the publishers.

ever had any religion at all. The very fact that the majority of English households in their own homes have heard wireless broadcasts from most countries of Europe and from other parts of the world besides must bring home to us all that the world is, in some respects, smaller to-day than even England was in the days of the coaches. The multiplication of factories in the East means hungry mouths in Lancashire. Cheap bread in England means poor farmers in the Western prairies. More work for Polish miners means less work for British miners. Improved weather forecasts and the shipping bulletins of the British Broadcasting Corporation mean less work for the ship-repairers. And so the merry, or grisly, dance goes on. We are members of a family, and what happens in one country is bound to have its due effect on other countries. The sooner the world realizes that men are brethren, and that the good of the whole is the good of each, the sooner we shall have healed our diseases and chased away our sorrows.

The Christian Brotherhood of Man is something deeper and grander than this. It is rooted and grounded in the Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. Here again we have the same confusion. Just as there is a Brotherhood of Man which can be accepted independently of Christianity, so there is no need for a man to be

a Christian in order to believe in the Fatherhood of God. Any theist will come to that conclusion. The man who believes in any one god at all is bound to accept the doctrine. God is Creator, and therefore stands in the position of Father to every living creature. It is arising out of this idea of a common Fatherhood of God that we have the idea of the universal Brotherhood of Man. But the Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God involves something more than this. In the Christian sense all men are not children of God until they realize in their own life and experience that God is their Father. That all men can become children of God is the very heart of the Christian gospel, but not that all men are now children of God. They must be 'adopted,' to use Paul's illustration from Roman society. They must be 'born again,' to use the Greek figure of speech which is found in the Fourth Gospel. Or, to refer again to that same Gospel, they must be born of water and spirit. There is another life other than this life in the flesh. This other life is the life in the Spirit. It would be good if we, in English, had two words to distinguish between these two qualities of life, because it is partly for lack of means of easily making this distinction that the present confusion has arisen. In the Gospel according to St. John the distinction is made

sharp and clear. There is one life (*bios*) which we live here and now. It ceases with what is commonly called death, ordinary physical death. To this *bios* belong the common ideas of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. But there is also another life, *zoe*. This is life in the Spirit, and it is independent of physical death. It begins when men realize something of that which Jesus came to give men, that they might have it abundantly. It is a life that is full and rich and free, so rich and so full that beside it all other life is the dull and monotonous thing which many people find their life (*bios*) to be. It was this abundant life (*zoe*) which those first followers of the Lord Jesus found at Pentecost. That same life with its abundant joy drove the first followers of St. Francis of Assisi singing as they wandered in pairs along all the highways and byways of Europe; '*jongleurs de Dieu*,' God's happy minstrels, they called themselves. They, too, praised God with gladness and singleness of heart. It gave to them a tremendous joy, for in their own souls they had discovered the true riches of spiritual experience. All such reap the harvest of the Spirit, fruits such as others can never know. They find the true joy of service. They have ceased to 'live their own life,' and in its place they are living the 'life of the Spirit.' They seek only the 'Well done'

of God their Father, and, not needing to be concerned unduly with what others think, particularly those who may be able to harm or help, they can thoroughly enjoy themselves in any task, whatsoever task it may be. And in moments of quietness, or even by the busy highway, there comes to them the joy and the rapture of the presence of God. There is no greater joy than this; it is the very mountain peak of living. It is the crown of life itself.

Here is greater fullness and greater freedom than any humanist can ever know, and herein is our counterblast to them. We have no need to spend time in attempting to show where they are wrong. On the contrary, our part is to show men what has always been inherent in the Christian faith, though may be sometimes temporarily lost and clouded over. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, and that abundant life (*ζoe*) which the Lord Jesus died that we might have. It may be that if Christian people had always emphasized this abundant life, there would never have been any humanist movement at all, and we would never have seen the pathetic gropings of D. H. Lawrence for what the Christian knows quite plainly is actually the life (*ζoe*) of the Gospel according to St. John. There never ought to have been any

need for any man to turn anywhere else except to the Christ to find that more abundant life (*zoe*), out of intense dissatisfaction with this life (*bios*), the only life of which they seem to have been aware.

CHAPTER VI

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE WORLD TO COME

We made reference in the previous chapter (see p. 124) to the fact that a large number of Christian people still think of heaven almost entirely as a place where righteousness is rewarded. We suggested that actually they were good Deuteronomists; they are, as a matter of fact, even better Deuteronomists than the Deuteronomists themselves, for the pioneers had but this present world with which to work.

The beginning of the movement which has reached out beyond death is found in the eighty-eighth psalmist.

> Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?
> Shall the shades (R.V. marg.) arise and praise thee?
> Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave?
> Or thy faithfulness in Abaddon?
> Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
> And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
> (Ps. lxxxviii, 10-12.)

We find here no real hope of any life beyond the grave. The psalmist has not advanced as far as that. He has come, however, to the point of realizing that if redemption and salvation do not

come to him soon, the only time when they can possibly come to him is in Sheol, for, as he says,

> My soul is full of troubles,
> And my life draweth nigh unto Sheol.
> I am counted with them that go down into the pit.
> (Ps. lxxxviii, 3 f.)

It is when men become convinced that they have no hope of any reward for righteousness in this world that they begin perforce to look for it in another. They are convinced, and rightly convinced, that something of the kind must be forthcoming somewhere, sometime, whether it is in the nature of a reward or not. If it does not come on this earth, then it must come on another earth, or in heaven.

The next stage, we would maintain, is instanced in the first psalm. Many commentators can see in this psalm no reference whatever to any future life. The verse in question is the fifth,

> Therefore the wicked shall not stand (the word is *qum* more properly 'rise up') in the judgement,
> Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

The interpretation of this verse depends entirely on what has already been decided as to the date of the psalm. Those who hold that the psalm is comparatively early in date interpret the verse to mean that the wicked shall not continue to stand when judgements come, that is, the ordinary and continuous judgements of history,

and that sinners shall not last in the community of the righteous (so, for instance, Moffatt). On the other hand, those who view the psalm as the product of a much later age, interpret the verse to mean that when the Day of Judgement comes and the life of the New Age commences, the wicked shall be blotted out and have no part in the coming glories. In the community of the righteous in the blessed days of Messiah, sinners will have no portion. This is the belief in the resurrection of the righteous, but not of the wicked, the ancient doctrine of which the modern notion of conditional immortality is the present-day counterpart. It is found in the late Apocalypse, Isa. xxiv-xxvi, namely in Isa. xxvi, 14-19, where righteous Israel shall rise from the grave.

> Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise.
> Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust:
> For thy dew is as the dew of herbs,
> And the earth shall cast forth the shades (R.V. marg.).
> (Isa. xxvi, 19.)

This apocalypse is probably as late as the third century B.C., in the time of the rivalries of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. In the second-century apocalypse of Daniel, we find the resurrection both of the just and the unjust.

> And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan. xii, 2.)

We ourselves see in the first psalm a belief in the resurrection of the righteous at the judgement which comes at the end of the age. We have suggested elsewhere (*Z.A.W.*, 1933, Heft 3/4, pp. 304 f.) that this psalm is one of the latest in the whole Psalter, and that it was placed in its present position at the time when the Psalter was arranged for a triennial reading side by side with the triennial reading of the law (see above p. 41). It is an introductory psalm, not to the praises of Israel so much as to the study of and meditation in the law. The blessed man is the man whose occupation (the word *chephets* came in later Hebrew to mean not only 'delight,' but 'occupation,' 'work,' as in Eccles. iii, 1, &c. . . . In Deutero-Isaiah, the intermediary meaning is found, 'pleasure,' 'purpose,' 'work,' Isa. xliv, 28; liii, 10; &c.) is in the Law of Jehovah, that is, the blessed man is the faithful and devoted scribe.

In any case, in Ps. lxxxviii, 10-12 we have the first step towards a solution of the problem of the apparent non-fulfilment of the Deuteronomic promise of rewards to the righteous. If it does not work out in this life then it must work out elsewhere, in another life, or in another world. From this insistence there sprang in course of time the Apocalypses, that strange development of Hebrew prophecy. With all their strangeness

and their extravagancies, these writings are a standing monument to that faith of the Jew which no persecutions and perplexities could destroy, even though they had disasters and disappointments such as surely have been the lot of no other people since the world began.

Apocalypse has its roots in the prophecies of Amos, in Amos v, 18-20, the very verses from which the Deuteronomic prospect opened out.

> Woe unto you that desire the Day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness and not light. Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

The Day of Jehovah is the Day of Judgement against the enemy of Jehovah. Before the advent of Amos it had been assumed that the enemy of Israel was necessarily the enemy of Jehovah. Amos established for true prophecy the ruling idea concerning the Day of Jehovah that the enemy of Jehovah was unrighteousness in every shape and form, whether in Israel or among the unrighteous heathen, but the identification of the enemy of God with the heathen was never entirely excluded, even in the prophets, and during the decay of prophecy it flourished again. Once more, in later as in the earliest days, the Day of Jehovah becomes a Day of Vengeance on the heathen.

The second element in the growth of the ideas of the Day of Jehovah is due to the metaphor which Amos chanced to use, namely the metaphor of gross darkness without a ray of light in it. Henceforth this becomes an element in all visions and descriptions of the Day of Jehovah. The emphasis on the darkness grows until it seems as if the writer is describing the dissolution of all created things. Sun, moon, and stars cease to give their light; the heavens tremble, and the earth is shaken out of its place. And yet always in prophecy, however cataclysmic the description may seem to be, the meaning of the vision is that there will be a change in this present world order. There is, as yet, no question of the cessation of this present world and the inauguration of a new age, wherein there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. This latter belongs to apocalypse proper. Perhaps the best example is Isa. xiii, 6-19. Here verses 10 and 13 appear at first sight to describe the end of all things. The sun, moon, and stars all cease their shining, both heaven and earth tremble and quake. But reference to verse 17 and the following verses shows that no world-wide and final catastrophe is intended at all, for the instruments of the Divine vengeance are the Medes. They will accomplish Jehovah's purpose in destroying Babylon. The terrible portents in

the heaven above and on the earth beneath are simply developments of the original metaphor which Amos used.

The writer of this type next after Amos is Zephaniah, who wrote in the seventh century, some one hundred years after Amos, and about one hundred years before the writer of Isa. xiii. Zephaniah's description of the Day of Jehovah is found in Zeph. i, 14-16, where verse 15 reads :

> That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

Here we have an increased emphasis on the original metaphor; the darkness is made still more dark. We find, however, as yet no reference to the sun, and the moon, and the stars. These appear, as we have seen, in Isa. xiii, 10, 13 :

> For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. . . . Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of her place.

Once again, and still later than Isa. xiii, we have Joel. He writes of 'a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness' (Joel ii, 2), phrases borrowed directly from Zephaniah. Also, in Joel ii, 10, we find the picture of Isa. xiii, 10, 13 :

> The earth quaketh before them (*i.e.* before the advance of the avengers); the heavens tremble: the sun and

> the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

But Joel is not writing of the end of the world in any sense whatever, because he mentions 'a great people and strong' who are to accomplish the judgement of Jehovah. Later in the chapter it is indeed somewhat difficult to decide whether the prophet Joel is still developing the original metaphor of Amos, or whether the change-over to the idea of the end of the world is being made.

> And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. (Joel ii, 30 f.)

In any case, Zion and Jehovah stand fast (ii, 32). There is going to be a Great Assize in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, mainly, if not wholly, directed against the heathen (iii, 2, 4, 12). This valley has nothing to do with the King of Judah of that name; it means, as Joel himself says, that 'Jehovah will sit to judge' all the nations round about (iii, 12). Here, in this picture of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, is the origin of the idea of the Grand Assize at the End of Days, which has been carried over into the more recent, though not modern, idea of the one great Judgement Day for all.

A still further development is found in Isa. lxv, 17 ff. :

> For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth : and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind . . . and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her (*i.e.* in Jerusalem), nor the voice of crying ; for the child shall die an hundred years old . . . the wolf and the lamb shall feed together . . .

It is to be doubted whether the prophet means a new heaven and a new earth in the full sense of later days, but the germ of the later thought is certainly here, though not as yet linked up with the terrors of the Day of Jehovah. All, however, is still prophecy, because as yet the whole change is to take place in the normal course of the world's history, and the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance are to be kings or princes or nations of the earth. These passages may have been interpreted apocalyptically by generations of commentators, as certainly they were by later Biblical writers, but we still are, nevertheless, in the realm of prophecy, and as yet only the seeds of the growth of apocalypse are to be found. God Himself is certainly acting throughout, but it is more or less in the ordinary stream of the history of the world. His agents are human agents. In Joel, his agents are the northern army ; in Isa. xiii, 17, they are the Medes. In Zephaniah it had been the Scythians.

Gradually, as the generations pass by, the Jews come to realize that, so far as this present world is concerned, their case is hopeless. Just as the eighty-eighth psalmist (see p. 138 above) began to realize that if ever the righteous man was to see good it would have to be in another life, so the prophet-apocalyptists began to perceive that it was not in such a world as theirs that the nation would ever be set on high. Judah's position politically was impossible. As a matter of fact it had always been so, ever since David's time. Only then was there any real prospect of any wide political power, for during that period, and for the only time, were all three mighty empires of the near East, Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt, suffering from a period of decadence. This never happened afterwards. We therefore find Judah situated in the midst of great warring empires, a small people among multitudes, comparatively poor amongst the wealthy nations of the ancient world. From her position, whilst comparatively weak, except only for the last stages of a stubborn defence, she was necessarily a source of anxiety to every army which marched across the coastal plain, whether an Egyptian army advancing against Assyria or Babylonia, or any army advancing against Egypt. She lay on the flank, and unless she was reduced to submission she constituted

a constant threat, especially in view of the vacillating policy of many of her kings and rulers.

They sought alliances first with one side and then with the other, for no King of Judah could afford to be on the losing side; that, they always knew, would mean the end. This policy itself, however, was fraught with considerable danger, and in the time of Hezekiah it almost brought disaster. Isaiah of Jerusalem had favoured a strict neutrality. He perceived that, in his day, if Hezekiah held aloof, and did not get entangled in any of the numerous plots and counter-plots, he would be left alone. Their hope was in a careful neutrality and a sublime trust in Jehovah. This policy was sound for a while, but in the next century Jeremiah advised, not neutrality, but submission. Things had developed too far for any other policy to be adopted. Neutrality was impossible, and the old policy of seeking alliances with Egypt, which Isaiah had condemned, was now suicidal. It did indeed bring disaster, irreparable disaster, and kingdom, city and Temple were one and all destroyed. There remained the hope of restoration, and for a while this fire burned brightly among the exiles in Babylon. But the fulfilment was nought beside the hope, and in process of time the situation grew from bad to worse. Whatever they did, it became more and more certain that

politically there was no future for Judah. If, therefore, Judah was ever to see good, if ever the Deuteronomic promises were to be fulfilled to a righteous nation and Judah was to see the good she deserved because of her faithfulness to Jehovah and to His Law, then it must be elsewhere, and in spite of the natural course of the affairs of this world. It could not possibly be realized in such a world as that in which they found themselves.

> We hoped to be the head and have become the tail:
> We have toiled laboriously and had no satisfaction in our toil;
> And we have become the food of sinners and of the unrighteous,
> And they have laid their yoke heavily upon us.
> They have had dominion over us that hated us and smote us;
> And to those that hated us we have bowed our necks,
> But they pitied us not.
> We desired to get away from them that we might escape and be at rest,
> But found no place whereunto we should flee and be safe from them.
> And we complained to the rulers in our tribulation,
> And cried out against those who devoured us;
> But they did not attend to our cries,
> And would not hearken to our voice. (Enoch ciii, 11-14.)

And so it came about that the Day of Jehovah, if ever there was going to be a day when Jehovah

would put things straight, would involve Jehovah putting His arm through the sky, and Himself seeing to it that justice was done at last. It could never be accomplished otherwise. Jehovah Himself must hear their cry, and Himself with His own outstretched arm once more accomplish their salvation. This is one of the essential distinctions between prophecy and apocalypse. The latter is born of utter despair, and its only hope is that Jehovah Himself will intervene and accomplish what no human instrument of His had ever been able to bring about. They looked away to the heavens, and everlastingly watched the skies. When would the Day of Jehovah come? What would it be like when actually it did come? Would the righteous receive their reward, and what sort of a reward would it be? What would happen to the wicked in that awful day? What were the signs of its coming?

There sprang up a gradually increasing literature in answer to these questions, growing ever more fantastic in its imagery. The writers sought to strengthen and to revivify those in whom hope was dying. In times of persecution especially is this literature to be found, and, partly because of the dangers of the time, partly also because it was believed that all inspiration had belonged to the days of the prophets, the apocalypses themselves were ascribed to the great

figures of the past. The result of this is that generally the one thing of which one can be reasonably sure is that an apocalypse was not written by the man whose name it bears, but was always written years after he was dead, whether Daniel, Moses, Adam, Isaiah, Enoch, Ezra, or even John.

We have referred to the development of the metaphor of darkness, originally used by Amos. Combined with this is the use of symbols which is characteristic of Ezekiel. The strange beasts of his trance-like visions are found once more in Daniel, again in John, and elsewhere. The marvellous river which flowed out from the Temple (Ezek. xlvii) becomes in John the River of the Water of Life. These are but examples of the way in which any metaphor or simile once used by an apocalyptist becomes part of the general picture for all future such writers. Each writer finds a background with which he must perforce work. It is a background of darkness, a darkened sun and a darkened moon, and stars which have withdrawn their shining. It becomes in course of time a background of falling stars, earthquakes and diverse terrors. Into this background there is painted, as the years pass by, a picture of the peace which will follow for the righteous, a flowing river and on its banks trees of marvellous fecundity. It

seems as though all apocalyptists had but one surface on which to work. Each man must clear for himself a little space in the forefront of this one great canvas, and there, in the midst of the general background, growing more and more confused as the generations pass by, he paints his little picture for the needs of his own day. He aims to satisfy the immediate and clamant need. The next artist treats this last picture as part of the general background, and within it adds his quota to the whole. At last the only hope of interpretation lies in the fact that many of the figures and similes have long since lost their original meaning, and some few have no meaning at all, but have become almost wholly formal and stereotyped. But whatever has once been added must always remain, and never cease to have its place.

The late Dr. Charles pointed out (*Between the Old and New Testaments*, Home University Library, pp. 161 f.) a most interesting effect of this persistence of detail in connexion with numbers. His story is a salutary warning for these days. The trouble began as soon as any number was mentioned at all. This was Jeremiah's original statement concerning seventy years (Jer. xxix, 10). This general figure for the time of a return to Jerusalem from Babylonia, meaning doubtless roughly two generations and intended to indicate

that the exile would be long enough for something approaching a permanent settlement for the exiles, was taken later to be a Divine promise to be fulfilled in literal fact. The 'seventy years' was first taken to mean the time of Haggai and Zechariah, and in the young Zerubbabel many hoped to find the promised deliverer. But the time proved to be not yet. Evidently there was something wrong in the interpretation of the 'seventy years.' Then it was thought that the reference must be to 'seventy sabbaths of years,' that is, seventy times seven, four hundred and ninety years. We get this expectation in the time of the Hasmoneans, the period of the earlier parts of the Book of Enoch. Again it proved to be not yet. It must be the reigns of seventy angels who successively were to preside over the destinies of Israel. The process has gone on ever since, and still continues in connexion with these and other figures. The three and a half years of persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, from the spring of 168 B.C. to the autumn of 165 B.C., become the forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days of the Apocalypse of John, xi, 2, 3; xiii, 5, and in these days, with the help of measurements from the pyramids, most marvellous results are achieved.

In the time of their distresses the Jews learned

from Persia of the Zoroastrian theory of successive ages of the world's history. Here was exactly the idea which would help them most, and it came to them as springs in the thirsty desert. The Day of Jehovah was the end of this age. This present age was certainly without hope for the Jew; it was all darkness for him. But when this earth and this heaven had passed away, and in their place there was created a new earth and a new heaven, then at last would come a time of happiness for the righteous Jew. All wrongs would be righted, and the age of peace and prosperity would commence. The Day of Jehovah meant the ushering in of 'the Next Age.' It was therefore never in 'the next world' in any modern sense of the phrase that the Jew ever looked for the fulfilment of the Deuteronomic promises and the final working out of that system. It was in the Next Age. We would do well always to remember that when any apocalyptic writer of any age writes of the end of the world he never means what the modern scientist means by the end of the world. The two ideas have nothing at all in common. They belong to two entirely different realms of thought, which nowhere and at no time even remotely approach one another. For the apocalyptist this present earth and the solid vault of heaven which covers it are destroyed

only that a new earth and with it a new heaven may replace them. And in no sense whatever is this new heaven a spiritual heaven in our use of the term. The modern scientist, when he refers to the end of the world, means the break up of this planet, or the time when it is a dead world, and has nothing at all to say about the heavens in which it circles. If, when we refer to an apocalyptic passage, we would use the correct translation, 'the next age' instead of the more popular phrase 'the next world,' to which we have all grown accustomed, we would save men from considerable confusion.

The apocalypses may be the offspring of despair, but they involve despair only of this present world order. The one thing which most certainly is not involved is despair of God, or lack of faith in Him. On the contrary, they are a lasting monument to a sublime faith which nothing can destroy. These apocalyptists are absolutely certain, just as certain as the thirty-seventh psalmist and his companions are in another way, that God stands by the righteous. The thirty-seventh psalmist can still hold, though with difficulty, that God stands by the righteous in this present life. The apocalyptists know from sad experience that it is impossible to maintain this position in its original form. They make use of the new ideas which had come

to hand since the psalmist's day, and hold that God will stand by the righteous though the heavens fall. In fact it is in the midst of falling heavens, and through terrors which only an apocalyptist could conceive, that most of all God will prove His faithfulness. Doubtless the thirty-seventh psalmist would have written an apocalypse if he had lived some four hundred or so years later. He, too, would have made use of the 'modern' idea of a new earth and a new heaven, and would have rejoiced that his vindication was sure.

The message of the apocalyptists enabled the men of those far-off days to maintain a faith in God which their predecessors had been able to maintain in another way. Just as these writers left behind them the thought-forms of days gone by, so we leave to far-off days their own expression of the truth which abides for ever. For us, we must re-interpret and re-express that same truth which the apocalyptists preserved in days of great distress and grave peril. Like Wilhelm Meister and his puppets, the clothes change, but the story is the same. In this case it is the story of man's undying faith in God and God's undying love for man.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOLUTION OF THE GREEKS

THE expression through the medium of apocalypse by determined men of their firm faith in God and in the eventual vindication of the righteous could be of service only to those whose ideas had been influenced chiefly by the contact with Persia and the New Age ideas. For Jews generally this approach may well have continued to be adequate, though the beginning of the Christian era found many Jews of the Dispersion already seeking to combine a devotion to the Law of Moses with a whole-hearted appreciation of the teaching of the Greek philosophers. Such an enthusiast was Philo of Alexandria, and he doubtless was one of a number of Alexandrian Jews who were full of zeal in this matter. The Jewish Christians held to the apocalyptic expectations. They identified the End of Days with the return of the Lord Jesus in great power and glory, simply transferring to the Parousia all the imagery and expectations of the apocalypses. The first followers of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem undoubtedly were influenced by these hopes

when they pooled their resources and lived on the capital in the expectation of a speedy return. The Apostle Paul probably never ceased to look forward to a return in the clouds of heaven, though he doubtless retreated during the years from the prospect of an immediate return such as he presumes in 1 Thess. iv, 15—v, 7.

Many Gentile Christians would have as little interest in the apocalyptic conception of the End of Days as they would in the Jewish conception of Jesus as Messiah. It is, therefore, not in the least surprising to find that, just as the word 'Christ' loses its Messianic significance among Gentile Christians, so also the apocalyptic outlook on this world ceases to be universally appreciated. Gradually, as the Church becomes more predominantly Gentile, the ideas of the Græco-Roman world become the framework of Christian Gospel at the expense of the Jewish apocalyptic setting. Certainly an apocalyptic solution of the problem of the troubles of the righteous would be of no use to those who cared nothing for that type of thought. A new departure had therefore to be made.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have, we believe, an example of the way in which one writer attempted at one and the same time both to provide a new answer to the problem and to bridge the gap between the two modes of

thought. This aspect of the epistle has been pointed out by E. F. Scott (*The Epistle to the Hebrews,* pp. 115-121), though he discounts the Alexandrian Philonic element in the epistle. He finds the immediate associations of the epistle in Jewish theories such as that of the Heavenly City which was conceived as the eternal counterpart of that Holy City, the old Jerusalem, which had been on earth the glory of God's people Israel (cf. Rev. xxi, 2, &c.). These Jewish speculations themselves, however, as he admits, are ultimately due to the influence of the Platonic dualism.

The occasion of the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews was similar to the occasions which gave rise to the writing of the apocalypses. It was written, as they also were, for faithful souls in a time of tribulation, in order that their confidence might be maintained and their courage made strong. The theme of the epistle also is in essence the theme of the apocalypses. It is the fulfilment in the world to come of the promises made to the saints. These were promises of prosperity to the righteous. 'Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee' (vi, 14). The test of the righteousness of God is that He will surely fulfil His promises and will reward men according to their work and labour of love, 'for God is not unrighteous

to forget your work and labour of love' (vi, 10, A.V.). The primary guarantee of the fulfilment of the promises is the mighty oath by which God sware. He sware by Himself, and there was none greater by whom He could swear. There are, therefore, two guarantees which nothing can alter—the promise itself which actually needed no confirmation, and the mighty oath in the Name of God Himself. To this is added another guarantee in the Lord Jesus Himself, who for us as forerunner entered 'within the veil.'

But how are the promises to be fulfilled in the world to come if not in the old apocalyptic sense? The author had been trained in Alexandrian religious philosophy, and so for him, equally as for the apocalyptists, there were two worlds. For him there was this present world of time and sense, and standing over against it was the world of reality. This present phenomenal world is a shadow, an insubstantial copy of that other real world which can never pass away. The one is earthly, material, imperfect; the other is heavenly, spiritual, perfect. Philo and his companions had sought to obviate the difficulty of this Platonic dualism by adopting the idea of the Logos, or Word, as the mediating influence between the two worlds. Because of the impregnation of this phenomenal world by

the Logos, it was possible for man to pass from the outer or lower material world to the inner or higher spiritual world, from the temporary to the eternal, from existence to reality. This idea also the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews adopts, and he identifies Jesus with the Divine Logos. He is the heir of all things,

> through whom also he (*i.e.* God) made the worlds, who, being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power . . . (Heb. i, 2.)

The revelation of Jesus Christ is therefore complete and final, since He, as the effulgence of the glory of God, gathers up in Himself all the broken lights by which through the ages God had led men on towards this consummation. As the Divine Logos, Jesus is the very secret of the meaning of the world. He was the Divine Agent in Creation, and it is by Him that this present world subsists and endures. He is the reality within it, by means of which it has even a temporary existence. He is all in all so far as this world is concerned. Without Him men could never have found God, and in Him God comes near to men.

Because of His finality and because of the consequent completeness and perfection of His revelation, man can approach to a realization in this present world of the reality of the other

world. It is by this realization that the writer seeks to provide his 'modern' solution to the baffling problem of the troubles of the righteous. This realization he identifies with the advent of the world-to-come of the apocalypses, and it is here that he seeks to build a bridge between the two types of thought. It is probable that in the phrase 'at the end of these days' (i, 2) that we have an intentional modification of the regular apocalyptic formula 'at the end of the days,' which the writer would find in his (Septuagint) Bible. He connects the End of Days with the full revelation of the Son. There is considerable confusion in this respect in the epistle, for whilst the writer embraces the Alexandrian system, he still retains some grasp of the apocalyptic mode of thought (x, 12 f.), and he uses phrases which must be interpreted in the apocalyptic sense (ix, 28; x, 37). But whilst he speaks of the full realization as yet to come, yet for him the new order has already appeared with the final and once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ (vii, 25; xii, 22). Already by faith—such faith as that of the saints of old of Heb. xi—the Christian can enjoy the fulness of fellowship with God through the mediation of Jesus the eternal High Priest, and the complete sacrifice of Jesus the Son. Faith is that which enables the true followers of Jesus to live in this present

world as though they were actually here and now living in the perfect world, that is, in the world to come, with all the promises fulfilled. Faith is the guarantee that the things for which we hope are not illusion, but are real; it is the source of our conviction of the reality of the things we cannot see. By it we are enabled to march steadfastly forward, as steadfastly as if the full realization of the promises were visible to us. We 'endure as seeing him who is invisible' (xi, 27). Faith lifts us immediately into the world to come. The problem is solved by such a faith as this. And faith is made effective through the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the great virtues of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that, by adopting the Alexandrian Logos and adapting it so as to identify it with Jesus Christ, the writer begins to break away from that constant antagonism of thought which would separate entirely this world from the world to come. It is, therefore, in marked contrast to the apocalypses, a writing of hope and not of despair. The whole of apocalypse rests on the conviction that this present world is going from bad to worse, and that it is ultimately alien to God. Underlying it all the time is the belief that matter is evil. All this means a discounting of the things of this world, and the glorifying by contrast of all things which are not of this

earth earthy. Always in another and a better world are the promises of God to be fulfilled. There, and there only, can the righteous be vindicated, for such a happy consummation can never be achieved in a world which at root is evil.

This would never do for the Greeks, or for any of the Greek way of thinking. They had never been satisfied until they had discovered some way of relating this present world to the real world. From then onward it may have been only a copy, but at least it was that. It could never be wholly evil, if to any degree it was an expression of the Logos. Furthermore, no Greek could ever be at home in an apocalyptic environment. Life for him should be glad and free. He was convinced that he must realize even in this life *to kalon,* that which is both ethically good and æsthetically beautiful. The Epistle to the Hebrews is in this respect equally an Epistle to the Greeks, for it offers a common meeting ground to both points of view. Though supernal joys in heavenly places are still far off, our confidence can be so firmly established here that even if we actually realized the promises now we could be no more sure of them, and but a little more happy. By faith we possess eyes which make it quite evident that the promises are real and can be realized in experience.

For the final step, and for a close approximation to what any modern solution can provide, we turn to the Gospel according to St. John. Here, we are convinced, is essentially a Greek Gospel. Not only in the prologue, but throughout the Gospel, we can see numerous indications of acquaintance with and dependence on Alexandrian thought in general and on Philo himself in particular. It is because of this that we regard the Fourth Gospel not only as the greatest of the four, but as one of the greatest books which 'even the world itself' could contain. For, if Jesus be the Logos, then this whole world is shot through with Him. It is as though the world were shot-silk, and when we gaze on it in His Light there flashes out the radiance of His indwelling Presence. John tells us that the Logos for which the Greeks had sought since Thales, the sixth-century pioneer of Miletus, is Life and Light and Love. Not only in the Cotswolds can man, as J. B. Priestley writes in *The Good Companions,* 'settle himself modestly and snugly in the valleys and along the hillsides,' but everywhere man can sign a peace with Him who is the Heart of the World, and it will last for thrice a thousand years. This world can be our home, and in it everywhere we can find the warmth of the Presence of God. The gloom of the world is only the shadow cast up

by the Light, and within its joys there are yet diviner joys. Beneath the covering which we see and hear and touch, there is a Living Splendour of Love and Life and Power. Plato was right after all. There is a hidden world, and it is the real world, beneath, behind, within. There are times when, like the Never-Never Land as darkness falls, this other world comes very near. Then it is that man can know the rapture of the Presence of God, and he learns that life can hold for him nothing better than this. In this life (ζωή) is the answer to the problem; here the righteous man finds an infinite joy.

The reward of the righteous is found in that inner harmony which comes from fellowship with God. The Stoics were right when they sought to live in harmony with Nature, for to live in harmony with Nature means to live in harmony with the God who made and loves us all. There is an inner light which lights every man who comes into the world (John i, 9), and if he follow that guiding light it will lead him to the Light of the World. If we 'believe on Him,' if, that is, we follow this Light and in faith walk in the Way, if we realize what sonship means in fellowship with our Heavenly Father, then we find that life which is life indeed. There is nothing else, for this is all. We can find in this rich fellowship a joy and a peace which none

of the accidents of the phenomenal world can touch. Earthquakes and typhoons, even cancer and the scourges of our modern race, fall into their true perspective. Whilst we may still be girt about with the garment of things as they seem, and unable ever in this life (*bios*) wholly to divest ourselves of this encumbrance, we can grow more and more into a confidence in that unseen world which is the eternal Home of Truth and Beauty and Love.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

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