

The Endeavour Magazine

A CHRISTADELPHIAN REVIEW

TWO SHILLINGS

In This Issue

Page 2

LIFE AND TIMES OF
JOHN THOMAS, M.D.

Page 4

THE MESSAGE OF THE
BOOK OF JONAH

Page 6

MARRIAGE—ANCIENT
WAYS AND MODERN
PROBLEMS

Page 9

REVIEWS

Page 13

THE IMPORTANCE
OF BAPTISM

Page 14

ABRAHAM'S VISION

Page 15

POEM

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A MESSAGE FOR TODAY

THERE is a true story of a London restaurant, now defunct, that at one time used to seat some 300 guests to lunch every working day. It was founded before the First World War and its proprietors at that time spent no little effort in perfecting a range of dishes that were not elaborate or expensive, but were tasty, nourishing and satisfying. The results were as described: patrons flocked in. This state of affairs continued into the 20's and the proprietors had no cause to doubt the wisdom of their policies. The same dishes continued to attract customers. By the 30's there was a slight decline in trade, but compared with other eating places business was still good. The war and the 40's reversed the decline of the 30's and the now traditional menu suffered less from wartime shortages than those of other restaurants. However, with the end of hostilities and the gradual improvement in food supplies, a sharp decline in business took place, and almost before the 50's had begun this eating house finally closed down. The management was at a loss to understand. The quality and quantity of food served had not declined in any way. Every attention had been given to good service. But the customers simply stopped coming. It had not been appreciated that public taste had changed. A menu that drew a full house in 1910 would not do the same in 1950.

Christadelphian preaching has gone through a similar experience. In the Victorian and Edwardian eras the majority of the population was willing to accept the authority of the Bible, and it was a relatively simple task to show that the tradition of the churches in a number of doctrinal points had moved away from the original Christian message. At the present time only the smallest minority of the population still consents to the authority of Scripture, and addresses designed to show that the Bible teaches man mortal simply register no response in the minds of many today. Despite this

(Please turn to back page)

The Life and Times of John Thomas M.D.

6. Go West, Young Man

by Brian Tighe

JUST AS EVENTS in Britain following the Industrial Revolution had played their part in altering the course of John Thomas's early life, so his later life was affected by the pattern of history on the American Continent.

In the long term, life in Nineteenth Century America pivoted around the drive to open up the West and subsequently, the Civil War. Dr Thomas was involved in both; actively in the first, and involuntarily in the second. Because of this it is relevant to sketch in the background to these events.

Britain's efforts to deal with problems in Canada after 1763 got her into even deeper waters during the succeeding twelve years. Basically her goal was to keep the peace between the Indians, the ancient owners of the territory, and the Americans, the latest aspirants for its control. To keep the peace Britain felt she must send large numbers of troops to America. To pay for the upkeep of these troops she tried to raise money in the colonies. This marked the beginning of a military struggle during which the American colonists declared independence. Their ultimate victory forced Britain, in the peace treaty of 1783, to acknowledge American independence and to relinquish to the new nation control of the land East of the Mississippi.

The newly won freedom brought trouble in its wake. The problems of creating an effective central government for a series of independent states were made more severe by con-

tinued frontier struggles with Spain and Britain — not to mention the Indians. The "Louisiana Purchase" of 1803 enabled the Americans to double their territory by the acquisition of a huge piece of land to the west of the Mississippi, but this merely shifted the boundary at which subsequent disputes took place. As the American territory grew there was a steady increase in the number of states admitted to the Union. A sudden halt to this steady progress came with the controversy over the admission of Missouri, which reopened the dormant issue of the extension of slavery.

Slavery had been forbidden in the North-West Territory in 1787. Thus the first national conflict over the issue occurred just beyond, in the so-called Upper Louisiana Territory, whose settlers first applied for admission to the Union under the name of Missouri in 1818. No problems arose until Representative James Tallmadge shocked the South by offering an amendment to the Act by which Missouri was to be admitted to the Union.

By this amendment the introduction of additional slaves into the new state would have been prohibited and further, all children born of slaves in that region were to be freed when they reached the age of 25. Slavery had been protected in the Constitution and no one had previously thought of interfering with it in the States where it had taken root.

The conflict was initially a constitutional one turning on the need to preserve a balance between slave and free states. A compromise was reached whereby Maine was carved out of Massachusetts as a separate free state to counter-balance a slave Missouri, and in future that part of Louisiana territory north of latitude 36° 30' was to be regarded as free. The issue rested there for a generation, although as time went by slavery drew the fire of such powerful forces in the North that Southerners felt impelled not only to defend it in practice but to promote it in principle in order to preserve the sectional balance. Dr Thomas spent his life in America at what might be called the interface between slave and free states. This affected his activities and sympathies when slavery and related issues had finally plunged the nation into Civil War in the early Eighteen Sixties.

As in colonial times, Americans still worked largely in the field, and to rise above a primitive subsistence it was necessary for them to trade abroad. Much of this trade was with Britain, especially towards 1830 as the administration in this country became more liberally minded and inclined to forget old grievances. Anglo-American trade was a simple exchange of raw materials for manufactures, reflecting the complementary nature of the two economies. The one single commodity dominating the exchange was cotton grown

in America, spun and woven into cloth in the mills of Lancashire, and often re-exported to America where the demand for cheap clothing grew with the expansion of the West.

Despite America's monopoly of cotton production the country still had an unfavourable balance of trade, which was made good by loans from abroad. In their drive across the continent the American people still depended on the old world, and especially on Britain. The sale, in London, of the securities of American banks and plantation states provided the capital which made possible the rapid growth of the country. Unfortunately, this Anglo-American partnership was too impatient for results, and the overextension of British credit brought about a financial collapse around 1840 which halted for a time the westward advance of settlers. This situation had its repercussions on John Thomas who had at that time migrated to the West and abandoned medicine for farming. The financial crisis upset his calculations, making farming by hired labour an unprofitable business and ultimately forcing him to abandon the project.

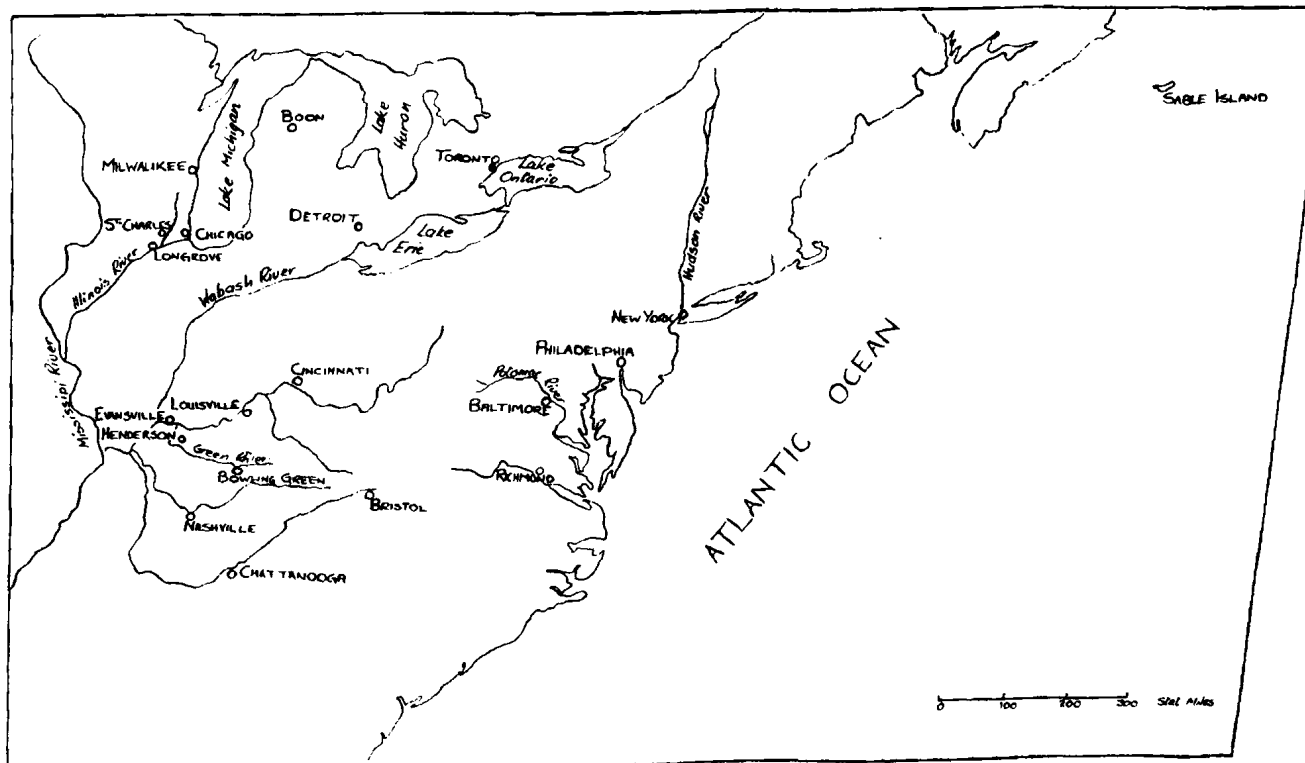
No one, in the early part of the

Nineteenth Century, had foreseen how quickly the American people would push into the heart of the continent. When, in 1803, Jefferson bought from Napoleon the unimaginably vast and remote Louisiana, he thought he had ensured enough space for Americans to expand for a thousand years. By 1830 the frontier of American civilisation had leapt more than four hundred miles to the Mississippi, and north-east across the Illinois prairies to the western shore of Lake Erie. There for some time it seemed likely to remain. School atlases wrote off Michigan as "interminable swamp" (and yet John Thomas visited the area in 1839 when looking for a suitable place to settle). Black Hawk's war of 1832 was a reminder of the Indian menace west of Mississippi, and for twenty years the flow of migration was directed to the Northern areas of Wisconsin and Minnesota together with the unsettled and uncharted tracts east of the Mississippi. It was not until 1870 in fact, that the population density of these areas exceeded two persons per square mile.

It is interesting to examine the motives of those who chose to join

the Westward exodus and compare them with the reasons that John Thomas gives for his own decision to move to the "far-west." First an essay by a Cambridge historian:

The instinct to reject rather than submit which impelled emigrants to the New World and which was ever present in colonial society became markedly developed in the American moving west. As he travelled into the Mississippi Valley he turned his back on a seaboard community whose controls had become intolerable. By deciding to break with an interfering landlord or an overbearing master, to quit an outworn farm, to rid himself of the burden of debt, to escape from social disapproval or religious orthodoxy, or simply to make a fortune in the West, the migrant renounced the whole conception of a corporate, customary society into which he had been born to play a determined role. . . . He "dis-established" not only the church, but most of the institutions which formed the corporate societies of the Old World.



Map Showing Area of Travels, 1830-1870

Dr Thomas's reasons for moving to the West are summed up in a letter to his brother in London: "You have, I suppose, been informed of my change of residence from the slave-holding, tobacco-growing, and soil-impooverished Virginia to the free, fertile and prairie Illinois. You may, perhaps, be surprised at the change and gratified to know the cause. It is manifold, but may be considered as *physical, intellectual, and moral*. These may be found in the soil, the people, and myself. I had a farm there, the fields of which had been so impoverished by constant cropping, close grazing and non-manuring that I could not raise enough to support my family." The letter went on to discuss the failings of Eastern American society in similar vein. It was, apparently, a letter from his brother-in-law in Illinois that first gave Dr Thomas the idea of moving there. The culmination of his several disagreements with Alexander Campbell had already unsettled him in Virginia, and he was actively looking for a means of supporting himself in such a way as would leave him at liberty to pursue his literary interests.

On April 3rd 1839 John Thomas set out "across the mountains of Virginia, the Ohio and other rivers, through the woods and forests of Indiana, and over the prairies of Illinois to Chicago." The journey, a distance of 900 miles, was accomplished on horseback and occupied nearly a month. The way was often difficult, he spoke of picking his way among the mud holes of the black swamp in Ohio, and into which his horse would plunge breast deep, and "toiling, day after day, over mountains, through swamps and the newly opened wilderness, existing upon everlasting eggs and bacon, half-baked dough, and home-made coffee." Nevertheless he found the country in Illinois strikingly beautiful, and calculated that with land being cheap and the price of wheat fairly high (a dollar and a half a bushel), he could profitably farm the area by means of hired labour, thus leaving his own time substantially free.

As events turned out the financial crisis, previously mentioned, rendered the venture unprofitable. Perhaps, in addition, he had been over-enthusiastic in his appraisal of the situation. The enterprise seems to have been fated from the very beginning. The following account of the journey by

his family (wife, daughter aged 3, brother, man-servant and boy) is taken from the *Ambassador*. Dr Thomas's first-hand account has been turned into the third person.

They set off on the 1st December 1839 with a wagon and four horses, and a one-horse carry-all on a journey which it took two months to complete. During this time they camped in the woods at night, with the exception of a few days they spent in Ohio where they halted to refresh themselves and their horses, and to visit some friends in Cincinnati.

Shortly after they started from Cincinnati the doctor had a narrow escape of being killed by a gun accident. He had with him a smooth bore rifle, which he used for the purpose of shooting game on the route, to replenish the larder of the party. His brother in loading the rifle had over-charged it, and when the doctor raised it to his shoulder to fire at some pigeons resting on a neighbouring tree, the gun burst and a fragment of the shattered stock struck him on the face, which the next moment was black with powder, and streaming with blood. His cap was on fire, his thumb was wounded; and it was discovered that a piece of something had passed through his cap three inches above his forehead. The barrel of the gun was thrown over his head, and alighted on the ground six feet behind him. For ten days after the accident, the doctor suffered severely from its effects, sparks of light danced before his eyes and his hearing was entirely suspended.

The party arrived at their destination, Longrove, some thirty-five miles from Chicago, in the middle of a storm. The property which Dr Thomas had purchased consisted of 288 acres, on which stood three or four empty oat stacks, one of which was built over and enclosed with fence rails, but nothing in the shape of a house. In addition to this, the land had to be entered in order to obtain a title. It would be interesting to know what Mrs Thomas's comments were on this occasion.

(To be continued)

The

JONAH IS UNIQUE among the twelve Minor Prophets since it is almost exclusively narrative: not the message of a prophet, but a story about one. And few books have suffered worse at the hands of expositors down the centuries. When the Bible was looked upon as primarily a source of proof-texts, the little book of Jonah seemed to have one point of special importance: Jesus had cited the case of Jonah's period inside the fish as prophetic of His own sojourn in the tomb. To those who mistakenly regard Hebrew prophets as essentially foretellers, this much made sense. In one point, at least, this prophet was useful to the Christian theologian. It is, however, completely certain that the allusion in the New Testament does not mean that the message of the book is exhausted when that point has been comprehended. There is still the book as a whole, which, we may confidently assume, has a message.

Another source of obscurity has been the desire of some commentators to use the book as a battlefield for apologetics of a restricted kind. Skeptics had expressed doubts about the historicity of various items in the book, but especially about the survival of Jonah for three days and three nights inside the fish. The expositors to whom we refer have considered it a main duty to defend the miraculous elements in the story since, it was thought, if Jonah did not in fact spend the specified time in the fish, then the resurrection of Jesus would be in doubt. To this end travel books were scoured and old sea-captains' yarns about men being swallowed by fish were gathered. Obviously the author did not intend this emphasis on his work, but in their zeal to

Message of the Book of Jonah

by Wilfred Lambert

defend miracle such expositors often neglected to ask what the author did in fact intend.

Nothing is known of the person of the author, not even his name. The date at which he wrote is equally vague. The first allusion to the existence of the book occurs in the apocryphal Ben Sira, who mentions "the twelve prophets" (49: 10). Ben Sira dates from early in the Second Century B.C., so Jonah must, of course, be a little older at least. There is no other external evidence that is relevant, and the internal evidence is almost completely restricted to the general purpose and tone, which it is the purpose of this article to explore.

There is nothing unique in the Old Testament about a narrative concerning a prophet. Prophets were often public figures in Israel and wielded considerable influence. Thus Kings and Chronicles, the histories of the period of prophetic activity, give records of quite a number of them, while the books of the prophets themselves commonly contain both the teaching and the personal history of the particular one. The value of this history lies both in the vividness which it brings to our understanding of prophetic activity and in the edification it incidentally conveys. Is then Jonah to be put beside the biographical narratives in Jeremiah? If one is inclined to agree to this proposition, the whole purpose and message of Jonah have been missed.

There is something unique about Jonah. Prophets were men, and could therefore fail. But only Jonah was always wrong. First, when given his commission to go to Nineveh, he rebelled against the order of God

and thought to escape from God by taking ship from Joppa. He seems to have shared the misconception that the God of the Hebrews was only powerful in Hebrew territory, and could be escaped from by flight. Having been proved wrong in this supposition, almost at the cost of his life, the second time he obeyed and proceeded to Nineveh to deliver his message of doom, that in 40 days the great city would be destroyed for its wickedness. The preaching had unexpected results. The whole city repented of its evil and the doom was withheld. Jonah's wrong thinking was again manifested. A Hosea or Jeremiah would have been deeply touched that the evil would not now be necessary so that the great city had been spared. But not so Jonah. He was only concerned with his own dignity. What he firmly predicted was not now to happen! He was angry that God was merciful and compassionate, quite forgetting that he too depended on these very qualities for his life. His anger then turned to darkest despair, as frustrated anger often will, and in this state the hot climate began to oppress him as he lay not eating or drinking. In his mercy God provided a shade-plant, but when this withered from a divinely sent worm, Jonah, still weaker, again despaired of life. Then God reminded him of the concern over the shade-plant, and to bring him to his senses God asked if He, the Almighty, was not entitled to be concerned for His own creation, man and beast, in so vast a city as Nineveh. With this the book ends.

The prophet was not merely disobedient or lazy. To the end he displayed wrong attitudes. It would

be a serious misunderstanding to imagine that Jonah must have repented of his harsh censorious ways. The author ended his book before any such change occurred, and in an attempt to understand the book's message this is a significant fact. Jonah is the consistently wayward prophet. Why should the writer have recorded a story so unflattering to his own nation? It would be inexplicable from the standpoint of a patriotic Hebrew. Not merely does the representative of the chosen people utterly fail, but the pagan Ninevites in contrast change their ways at the first call to repentance and so secure God's forgiveness. The inspired writer was concerned to offer instruction to God's people. Probably the book dates from the post-exilic period when the lack of political independence resulted in a greater consciousness of Hebrew uniqueness than had existed before. The contrast between themselves and the gentiles led to feelings of superiority. The chosen people needed to be reminded that God cared not only for them, but for all mankind, and that the city of the grossest corruption might easily repent more readily than a conceited Hebrew.

Thus the primary purpose of the book is to rebuke spiritual pride, and its message anticipated Jesus' words that the publicans and harlots were getting into the Kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees. Jonah is a unique gem among the prophets, written by a genuine prophet against the spurious claims and false outlooks of some claiming to be God's people. The value of the message has not been altered by the passage of time. Christians today are subject to the same temptations and may indulge in the same outlook. The very earnestness of Christian people can make them harsh and unforgiving to those who have not known God. But God is not like that. It was for such people that Christ died. It is as possible today as it was for Jonah to be more concerned with the authentication of one's message than with the prevailing of God's love. The folly and arrogance of Jonah stand out to all god-fearing people as a warning. We read how God forgave the Ninevites, but the book closes with Jonah's fate in doubt. And that is how we stand today.

Marriage: Ancient Ways and Modern Problems

By George McHaffie

EVERYONE has some special life interest, but all people share one interest in common—each other. This comes to focus particularly in the interest taken in marriage. Who will marry whom? How suitable a match will it be? Who has married whom and how are they getting on?

Despite much cynicism marriage can provide the most satisfying of human relationships. The Christian home in which the love of Christ for His church is mirrored provides a deep sustaining basis for human life. Not that the perfection of the participants is a pre-requisite of happiness. In a Christian home one can be oneself and be accepted. Our ambitions will not be laughed at, our fears and mistakes will be understood, even the hurtful things we say and do find pardon. Not all homes are, of course, like this; even some would-be Christian homes are plagued by irritations, frustrations, disappointments and mutual enmities.

This article is concerned with certain aspects of marriage, with courtship, with what really constitutes marriage, and looks at some of the problems arising out of marital breakdown.

Hebrew Marriage

A casual reading of the historical sections of the Bible is sufficient to indicate that the way marriages came about in ancient Israel was somewhat different from that of today's western civilisation. One prominent feature of early biblical marriage is the marriage of close relatives which occurs again and again. The marriage of Jacob to Leah and Rachel, or Rehoboam to Maacah are examples of cousin marriage, which was popular. Examples of other close

relationships such as niece and uncle, aunt and nephew can also be found. The reasons for this custom lie in several directions: the need to keep property within the family; to preserve the identity of the tribe; to ensure fidelity in time of war and to maintain traditions of worship. The devastating effect of intermarrying with other tribes is set out in many ways and the irreligious effect of marrying "foreign wives" is painfully illustrated. Esau's foreign wives "made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah" (Gen. 26: 35 R.S.V.).

In the present day, income is becoming more and more related to skill and less and less dependent on inherited wealth. There is also much greater social mobility. In consequence, marriage between close relatives is rare. Not only family but national and racial barriers to intermarriage have broken down. There is, nevertheless, a great lesson to be received from ancient ways. If witness is to be preserved, and here our interest is allegiance to Christ, then the witness can be weakened or lost by intermarriages with others of a different persuasion.

The custom of marrying close relations cut down severely the limit of choice of marriage partners. A man is led to marry either whom it is expected of him (e.g. Jacob and the daughters of Laban) or such as his parents can arrange (Eliezer is sent by Abraham to arrange a marriage for Isaac). Western instinct tends to recoil from the idea of an arranged marriage. Schoolday memories of political marriages of two royal personages sacrificed for the sake of alliances between their countries,

may have helped to cloud the issue. There is little evidence, however, that the arranged marriage was less successful than the modern ideal of "romance" as the basis of marital happiness. "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her" (Gen. 29: 20, R.S.V.). Romance can be a misleading basis for marriage. The youthful pursuits of romantic courtship though mutually enjoyed may not, and indeed most frequently are not, the pursuits which can be enjoyed when the responsibilities of marriage are assumed. The arranged marriage, on the other hand, at its best would attempt to provide a matching of matrimonial interests. Similar background, similar culture, similar standards and aims, including a similar worship, are all ingredients which would make for a minimum of marital tensions. Doubtless these aspects are not forgotten in the cooler-headed attitudes of modern couples, but romance can lead to an overruling of the more prosaic factors. The process of having a marriage arranged would also emphasise that there were many people with a share in the success of the union. In contrast in the western world we may be invited to admire the love of two people wrapped up in themselves, dependent on their own resources, perhaps at odds with their parents and friends as a triumph of "romance." The arranging of marriages could, of course, take place with the minimum of consideration such as when a daughter is offered to a war hero. "He who attacks Kiriathsepher and takes it, I (Caleb) will give him Achsah my daughter as

wife" (Judges 1: 13, R.S.V.). It may be of interest that the low rate of illegitimate births among the Sikh and Moslem immigrants to Britain is thought by many social workers to be due to the common practice of arranged marriages among these groups.

Courtship

It follows from the arranging of marriages by parents that courtship in ancient Israel was not a period with the same character as we know of it today. In some ways it was almost the opposite. Once the agreement to marry had been made the bride was not seen by the bridegroom unless she was veiled. This is brought out when Rebekah was returning with Eliezer (in whose presence she remained unveiled). As soon as she saw Isaac she took her veil and covered herself (Gen. 24: 65). This practice also made Laban's deception of Jacob over Leah easy. Nevertheless pressure on the parents from a son who had noticed a girl who took his fancy was possible. In the affair of Shechem and Dinah, Shechem asks Hamor his father, "Get me this maiden for my wife" (Gen. 34: 4, R.S.V.).

Marriage Ceremony

As one who has on occasion conducted marriage ceremonies it has been a point of special interest to find out what precisely was the marriage ceremony in biblical times, and how far, if at all, it would have relevance for today. There is, in fact, little to go on in Scripture and it could easily be thought that there is no indication of a ceremony as such. It might seem, indeed, that there was no marriage ceremony at all. "Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah and she became his wife" (Gen. 24: 6, 7, R.S.V.). This would, however, be to ignore the negotiations and celebrations which Eliezer undertook and enjoyed, and also the discussion when Eliezer and Rebekah arrived in the Negeb.

The actual marriage procedure appears to have been approximately as follows. After the parental agreement and certain undertakings made by the bridegroom the bride remained veiled from the bridegroom. This custom finds an echo even today in the vague tradition, which hardly survives in our prosaic and practical world, that the bride is not supposed

to be seen by the bridegroom on the wedding day until she appears (veiled) by his side at the ceremony. The period between parental agreement and marriage was not long. In the meantime the bride price in whole or in part would have been paid by the bridegroom's parents (cf Gen. 34: 12). Some of this money would be used for adornments for the bride.

An actual wedding is described in the following way:

So Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. But in the evening he took Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her.

Gen. 29: 22, 23.

The elements of this are a feast, followed by a formal leading of the bride by the father to the bridegroom's tent (or a specially prepared tent). The vanishing custom of the father "giving away the bride" is clearly a remnant of ancient custom. The wedding feast usually lasted seven days and in later times was doubtless more elaborate, and so too was the tent. In Solomon's Song (3: 7-11) we read of Solomon with a wedding crown and a splendid palanquin. The essentials are still much the same, however, a feast with a formal leading or procession to a nuptial chamber.

Nowadays a veil of privacy is drawn over the couple once they leave the wedding celebrations. Even their destination on their honeymoon (by derivation, a time for drinking mead) is traditionally kept to themselves. There was no such delicacy in ancient Israel. Public proof that the girl was a virgin was sought. In Deut. 22: 13-17 the importance of this is seen when the bride is later challenged as an excuse for a divorce. "I took this woman and when I came near her I did not find in her the tokens of virginity." To this the father replied, "... these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity." And they (the parents) shall spread the garments before the elders of the city." This refers, of course, to the rupture of the hymen following intercourse, and the resultant show of blood which apparently marked a prepared cloth in the nuptial bed. This action, perhaps rather crude from some standards, publicised the Hebrews' pride in pre-marital chastity. Negatively, the horror of pre-marital impurity was beyond a doubt. "But

if the thing is true that the tokens of virginity were not found in the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones" (v. 20, 21).

These ancient customs inevitably raise some questions for our own time. They raise the question of what marriage is.

What is Marriage?

There is little doubt that many of the conventions of the present-day marriage ceremony are largely irrelevant pleasantries. The bridal attire, the wedding cake, the wedding breakfast are not essential to a valid marriage. In Scotland, until 1st July 1940, a marriage was legal if made by declaration or mutual consent. Such a procedure had, nevertheless, to be reported to the Sheriff and a warrant obtained before the marriage could be registered legally. It is, perhaps, this Scots custom which helped Dr Thomas to arrive at the following conclusions in *Elpis Israel*:

A declaration in the presence of Lord Elohim and the consent of the woman, before religion was instituted, is the only ceremonial recorded in the case. This, I believe, is the order of things among "the Friends" or nearly so; and if all their peculiarities were as scriptural as this, there would be but little cause of complaint against them.

This minimal view of the formalities is a doubtful deduction from biblical custom. It is also open to a view of marriage which equates it with sexual intercourse. What is, in effect, pre-marital intercourse may be excused on the grounds that the couple are promised to each other (even if this is known only to themselves). The couple may subsequently drift apart and, in a permissive society, it may be concluded that their experience was a useful one which avoided an unfortunate marriage. Between the wars the French Premier Leon Blum scandalised many by proposing that pre-marital intercourse was a commendable way for young people to learn the art of marriage. Today if one may judge from the magazines which flourish, only remnants of a utilitarian argument are left and unchastity is justified simply because it is pleasurable. It is even equated with a sport.

With the fear of venereal disease medicated away and sophisticated systems of pregnancy avoidance freely available, some public opinion formers appear to be promoting the idea that sexual intercourse is not necessarily related to marriage at all. The impression is given that a radical permissive morality is as clever and advanced as space age technology, and the morals of the past are as irrelevant to the modern world as horses and carts. It is unlikely that public morals are quite so low, or lower than they have been in past generations, as some sections of the press would lead us to think. Nevertheless we hear little of a reasoned case against a general loosening of older moral standards.

We must, therefore, reassert what marriage is. It is a public not a secret contract. It is not a lonely relationship, but one which has the interest and, in varying degrees, the involvement of parents, relatives and friends. Man and wife have a responsibility in their relationship for the heritage of the past, a culture and a worship of which they are a part. They have a responsibility for the standards of the generation yet to come. Sexual union is not an isolated act but is part of birth. The isolation of the act as an end in itself in circumstances where the outcome in birth would be at best socially undesirable and at worst a tragedy for all concerned, including the child, is a deviation properly classed not as marriage but as fornication or adultery. These considerations are, of course, part of the case against permissiveness.

The Case Against Permissiveness

In many ways the same moral tensions are being seen in our time as were evident in the time of Jesus and Paul. These tensions arise from challenges to long established customs and laws. In the gospels this is seen in the clash between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. With Paul it is clearly seen as the clash between the spirit and Jewish legalism. Today it is the clash between the accepted standards of western civilisation, as these have been understood for centuries, and a challenge to their relevance to the society of the future. As in the first century there is a failure to appreciate the true principles of liberty (though liberty is talked about often enough) and liberty is confused with licence. If we think about the

traditional moralities and civilised standards, particularly those of the last century, there is much that could be challenged and improved. A plain, open, no nonsense attitude to morality is much to be preferred to hypocrisy and secrecy. We should therefore welcome many of the revolts that take place against the assumed standards of former years. But a welcome of this kind goes no further than genuine and responsible efforts to lift moral appreciation to new levels. So often, as in the current hippy phenomenon, a criticism of grasping materialism and man's inhumanity to man fails to rise to new and greater standards but rather descends to squalor, immorality and crude violence as its form of protest.

One of the essentials of the present time is the need for defenders of the divine moral standards to go beyond authoritarian pleas. Relevant reasons must be given for moral attitudes. Though it must also be recognised that in a highly emotional atmosphere the head may not be able to control the heart, and the will, in the shape of well grounded authoritarianism, may prove the best safeguard.

We find the most prominent error in permissiveness to be the idea it promotes of what constitutes "loving" a person. The glib statement "make love and not war" has a superficially Christian ring about it. Love in this context is, however, very much less than love for the whole person. As popularly applied it means treating another person as a thing, as an object of gratification. Another person's ideas, aims, hopes, fears, ambitions and personality are all made subservient to bodily attraction. Many sins take their origin in a failure to treat another as a person, e.g. racialism, war and many forms of economic exploitation. Even the exponents of permissiveness can no doubt see that. But in sexual matters reduction of human relations to a purely animal level seems acceptable to many who would regard themselves as progressive.

The spirit of our times has led some to revive ancient proposals which aim to diminish marital responsibility. In Sweden and Denmark group marriages have been established in which six or more individuals participate. No woman is supposed to be tied to any one man in the group and children are supposed to have the group as

parents. *Life* magazine produced a review of this procedure in the issue for 15th September, 1969, from which it would appear that the idea would not work. Couples tended to pair off and any one of the women acting promiscuously proved a disruptive influence. Points of contact with the Swedish and Danish ideas are found in the Israeli Kibbutz with its communal upbringing of children. The pioneers in the Kibbutzim hoped to shake free from the traditional family pattern of their past. Parents see their children for only limited periods in the day and all the work in raising the children is deputed to nurses. This system frees the mother from household duties for work in factory and field. One can hardly think that many mothers would value a freedom of this kind. It is hoped, however, on Marxist principles, that a new humanity from whence the attachment to private property has been bred out may be generated, and whose actions are undertaken for the good of all. Psychological assessments of the Kibbutz children have been undertaken and they have indeed been found to have a strongly developed group sense. To that extent the aims of the founders have been realised. On the other hand the children are said to be lacking in inventiveness, they act only as they feel the group would, they fear to be out of step. It is not therefore thought that in adult life the Kibbutz children would become outstanding in any sphere which would demand individual application of personal insights. It would seem a fair conclusion from these experiments in non-traditional marriage patterns that the family unity with its responsibilities, its securities, its unshakeable affections and sense of belonging are native to the human constitution. Anything less than this fails to produce the best in human life. The solidarity of the family cannot be weakened in any direction without stresses, regrets, instabilities and guilts emerging in the personality of the adults.

A further consideration arises from Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 6: 16, R.S.V..

Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one."

The "one body" or "one flesh" (A.V.) relationship is no mere techni-

cality. No doubt the evidence of the ages shows that there are many with such low sensitivity, crude and brutalised in their affections, that they are able to have numerous casual affairs without further reflection. Such people can hardly be counted among those who seek a moral solution to the problem of sexuality. For others not in this group it would seem that the relationship established illicitly cannot easily be eradicated from consciousness for it inevitably forms a sympathetic bond which, if given up, casts a shadow on future relationships. But these complications, heart-breaking though they may be, are seldom brought to public attention.

Yet a further approach concerns the differing male and female attitudes. It would seem that even promiscuous men nourish a hope that they will marry a virgin. The more, therefore, a man loves and respects a girl and intends to marry her the less is he disposed to take advantage of her. If, however, he is disposed to immorality he is most likely to take advantage of a girl for whom he has little respect and may hope not to see again. The girl, on the other hand, can only freely give herself to the man she seriously loves. There is therefore a basic incompatibility of approach in promiscuity which excludes mutual honesty and reduces the level of the relationship to a sub-human one.

Despite all the technologies of pregnancy avoidance, the number of illegitimate births and abortions continues to rise. Of the illegitimate children born, many will, of course, be brought up by one or both of their natural parents. Many will be adopted. Over a period of forty years about one million people will have been brought up as adopted children. Two thirds of these are likely to have been born illegitimate. Many will be placed in children's homes and of these many will not be regarded as suitable for adoption because of instability in the background of the natural parents. Such children may have many changes in the adult figures to whom they become attached during their tender years and may develop behavioural problems as a result.

The plight, disgrace and deprived circumstances of the unmarried mothers, unwanted children and the incidence of abortion all follow in the wake of sexual freedom. It is possible

that the problem was even greater in the ancient world, in which infanticide was a socially acceptable practice. Demands for sexual freedom must, however, be viewed against a tragic background.

The Microcosm

It is always easier to build up a case against a large abuse than against smaller but pressing moral issues. It is obvious that the compulsive gambler should not continue to lead his family to ruin. But would the same general considerations form a good argument against purchasing an office raffle ticket? While, therefore, it might seem obvious why promiscuity should be checked, the anticipation of marriage by an engaged couple who for economic or other reasons must wait to set up house, may not seem all that blameworthy. One must, of course, recognise that sins differ in degree. Yet it is not difficult to see that the basic principles which have already been laid down apply to the lesser as well as to the greater. Once again while it may seem that the clever and the sophisticated can avoid pregnancy neither the passion nor the opportunity may conform to premeditated sophistication, and the incidence of unwanted pregnancies among the population of Britain as a whole in these circumstances appears to be very high.

Christ Can Redeem

One hears of lifelong enmities between families, and sexual lapses being remembered and gossiped about over a lifetime. The guilt of the past may be difficult to erase from the mind and be carried as a heavy burden throughout life. It may be expected that the followers of Christ will give a lead to their generation in self-control and mutual respect. This is no doubt easily acknowledged. It was the same Jesus, however, to whom harlots came, and who, over a woman taken in adultery, spoke the immortal words, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." Jesus can both redeem from sinning and wash away the guilt of the past. This is part of the blessing of Christ that no one need live out their lives in guilty secrets, or feel shut off from God for "sins and faults of youth" or age for that matter.

(To be concluded)

Reviews

Modern Persecutions

Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ*. Hodder & Stoughton Paperback, 1967, 5s.

WHEN REVIEWING A BOOK by Christians of slightly different outlook from our own, humility is required. This is never more so than when we are dealing with the experience of Christians who have had to suffer for their faith in ways unimaginable in Britain. While a few of our brethren suffered imprisonment in the two great wars of this century, little that they had to suffer (great, in some ways, though that was) can compare with what Christians on the Continent suffered at the hands of the Nazis and then of the communists.

Tortured For Christ is the account of a Rumanian pastor describing not only what happened in the past but showing also the dangers for Christians today in countries such as Rumania. For although Rumania is considered today, by the British Press, to be "liberal", in so far that she has her own foreign policy (she opposed the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia and supports Israel rather than the Arabs), internally it is still a repressive police state.

From Jewish-Atheist to Christian

Richard Wurmbrand came from a Jewish family, but was orphaned and brought up without any religion at all. By fourteen, he not only did not believe, but considered belief in God and Christ positively harmful.

Yet he found an attraction in churches and felt it hard not to enter one even though he was sure there was no God. His atheism gave him no peace of mind, and he would very much have liked to believe in a God who cared about him.

In a remote village in the mountains of Rumania Wurmbrand met an old carpenter. He gave Wurmbrand a

Bible and prayed for his conversion. "And the Bible he gave me," says Wurmbrand, "was written not so much in letters, but in flames of love fired by his prayers. I could scarcely read it. I could only weep over it, comparing my bad life with the life of Jesus; my impurity with His purity; my hatred with His love; and He accepted me to be one of His own." (Page 12)

So he was converted, and soon his wife was too. But then the Nazis came, and persecution. The persecution was hard to bear but it did not last long. It taught them, however, a useful lesson, in that it gave the Rumanian Christians a confidence. "These Nazi times had one great advantage. They taught us that physical beatings *could* be endured, that the human spirit with God's help can survive horrible tortures. They taught us the technique of secret Christian work which was a preparation for a far worse ordeal to come—an ordeal which was just before us." (Page 13)

Under the Communists

When the Nazis went, the communists moved in, taking over by force as they did in other countries in the Eastern bloc. The communists aimed to use the churches in Rumania to advance communism. Those, like Wurmbrand, who stood out against this soon found themselves in prison, their families ill-treated, their property confiscated. Officially the church was still in being, but the pastors were secret agents of the communists and had to report on anyone new who started taking interest.

The "underground" church grew up instead. Some pastors played a double game on the communists, holding positions in the official church, but doing their real work underground. The Christians adopted counter measures, at some of which we may raise our eye-brows. Some Christians joined the secret police, thereby infiltrating the communists just as the communists had infiltrated the churches! But whatever doubts we may have about this, Wurmbrand claims that it was only by these means that relief was brought to many Christians in prison and that it was leaked to the outside world that he was still alive. Eventually, after spending 14 years in prison he was released to the West after international pressure and the payment by Christians in Norway

of a ransom of £2,500. This was as recently as 1965.

Christians under Torture

This book describes persecution and torture as terrible as anything from the Middle Ages. Yet one thing stands out with astonishing clarity: despite their physical and mental sufferings, these Christians were *happy*. If you read the accounts in our papers of the tortures inflicted by the Greek Colonels on those who offend them, you will have noticed the attitude of the tortured towards their torturers. It is one of hatred and bitterness. But those who have undergone similar tortures as Christians do not show this bitterness:

One great lesson arose from all the beatings, torturings and butchery of the communists: *that the spirit is master of the body*. Often, when tortured, we felt the torturing, but it seemed as something distant and far removed from the spirit which was lost in the glory of Christ and His presence with us.

A Christian was sentenced to death. Before being executed, he was allowed to see his wife. His last words to his wife were: "*You must know that I die loving those who kill me. They don't know what they do and my last request of you is to love them, too. Don't have bitterness in your heart because they kill your beloved one.*" These words impressed the officer of the secret police who attended the discussions between the two and afterwards he told me the story in prison, where he had been put for becoming a Christian. (Page 41)

This capacity to love puts us to shame when we consider the bitterness that sometimes flares up even between brother and brother in our community. That these prisoners could so love their enemies can be explained in one way and in one way alone: because, as they themselves said, the presence of Christ was with them. The book spills over with this Spirit of Christ:

My last deed before leaving was to go to the grave of the colonel who had given the order for my arrest and who had ordered my years of torture. I put a flower on his grave. By

doing this, I dedicated myself to bringing the joys of Christ that I have to the communists who are so empty spiritually. (Page 49)

The Christian teaching is clear. Communists are men and Christ loves them. So does every man who has the mind of Christ. We love the sinner even though we hate the sin.

We know about the love of Christ towards the communists by our own love towards them.

I have seen Christians in communist prisons with 50 lbs. of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonful of salt had been forced being kept afterwards without water, starving, whipped, suffering from cold, and praying with fervour for the communists. This is humanly inexplicable! It is the love of Christ which was shed into our hearts.

Afterwards, the communists who had tortured us came to prison, too. Under communism, communists, and even communist rulers, are put in prison almost as often as their adversaries. Now the tortured and the torturer were in the same cell. And while the non-Christians showed hatred toward their former inquisitors and beat them, Christians took their defence, even at the risk of being beaten themselves and accused of being accomplices with communism. I have seen Christians giving away their last slice of bread (we had at that time one slice a week) and the medicine which could save their lives to a sick communist torturer, who was now a fellow-prisoner. (Pages 51-52)

Living Dangerously to Preach

After his conversion, Pastor Wurmbrand preached, amongst others, to Russian soldiers—first when he met them as prisoners of war under the Nazis, then later when 1,000,000 Russian troops marched into Rumania in 1944. Though he was in considerable danger, he did not hesitate to discuss with the Russians:

In a shop I met a Russian captain with a lady officer. They were buying all kinds of things and had difficulty speaking to the salesman who did not under-

stand Russian. I offered to translate for them and we made acquaintance. I invited them to lunch in our house. Before beginning to eat, I told them: "You are in a Christian house and we have the habit to pray." I said the prayer in Russian. They put down forks and knives and were not interested in food any more. They began to ask question after question about God, Christ and the Bible. (Page 18)

By the contacts made, the Underground Church was built up in Russia itself:

We printed secretly and distributed among Russians many thousands of Gospels and other Christian literature. Through the converted Russian soldiers, we could smuggle many Bibles and Bible portions into Russia. (Page 19)

Once pressure was put upon the Rumanian Christians not to preach in public they adopted less open tactics, but bold and dangerous nevertheless:

The preaching of Christ in the new conditions was not easy. We succeeded in printing several Christian pamphlets, passing them through the severe censorship of the communists. We presented to the communist censor a booklet which had on its front page the picture of Karl Marx, the founder of Communism. The books were called *Religion is the Opium of the People* or other similar titles. He considered them to be communist books and put the seal on them. In these books, after a few pages full of quotations from Marx, Lenin and Stalin, which passed the censor, we gave our message about Christ.

We went to the communist demonstrations and distributed these "communist" booklets. The communists, seeing the picture of Marx, competed with each other to buy the book. By the time they reached page ten and found that it was all about God and Jesus, we were far away. (Page 28)

Under the communists, we devised a plan of having street preaching which with time became very risky, but by this means we reached many souls we could not reach otherwise. My

wife was very active in this. Some Christians would quietly gather on a street corner and start to sing. People crowded around them to hear the beautiful singing and my wife would deliver her message. We left the spot before the street police arrived. (Page 29)

Countering Communist Arguments

When Christians are living under persecution, there are no "hangers-on." Those who believe are truly committed and can argue their case enthusiastically and well.

About Jesus, the official communist doctrine is that He never existed. The workers of the Underground Church answer easily to this: "What newspaper have you in your pocket? Is it the *Pravda* of today or yesterday? Let me have a look. Aha! January 14th, 1964. 1964 counted from when? From the One who did not exist or played no role? You say He never existed, but you count the years from His birth. Time existed before Him. But when He came, it seemed to mankind that everything which had been before had been vain and that the real time began only now. Your communist newspaper itself is proof that Jesus is not a fiction." (Page 84)

It is not without risk that Christians openly oppose communism. They risk loss of education or occupation. More seriously they risk imprisonment or torture. But they do stand up openly nevertheless. Meetings are held in factories and universities to disprove Christianity. The Christians present can change them to do the opposite:

A professor of communism demonstrated at a meeting that Jesus was nothing else than a magician. The professor had before him a pitcher of water. He put a powder in it and it became red. "This is the whole miracle," he explained. "Jesus had hidden in his sleeve a powder like this, and then pretended to have changed water into wine in a wonderful manner. But I can do even better than Jesus; I can change the wine into water again." And he put another powder in the liquid. It became white. Then another powder and it was red again.

A Christian stood up and said,

"You have amazed us, comrade professor, by what you are able to do. We would only ask one thing more of you: drink a little of your wine!" The professor said, "This I cannot do. The powder was a poison." The Christian replied, "This is the whole difference between you and Jesus. He, with His wine, has given us joy for two thousand years, whereas you poison us with your wine." The Christian went to prison. But news of the incident spread very far and strengthened faith. (Pages 88-89)

The Underground Church and The Bible

Copies of the Bible are hard to get, and frequently can only be obtained if smuggled in. Apart from the secret printing the Christians can undertake themselves, there are again methods for turning the communists' activities to good account. Two books were published, *The Comical Bible* and *The Bible for Believers and Unbelievers*. Both books had many Bible verses, interspersed with comments showing how stupid they were. The criticism itself was so stupid that no one took it seriously!

The communist publishing house was very glad to receive thousands of letters, asking for reprints of atheist books, which quoted Bible verses in order to mock them. They did not know that these letters came from the Underground Church, which had no other opportunity of getting the Scriptures. (Page 88)

The Message to Us

Reading such a book as this should make us very grateful. Grateful that we live in a free society with no penalties for believing or preaching. We may have some doubts at certain of the activities undertaken by the Christians behind the Iron Curtain: how does one reconcile the idea of preaching to soldiers who become followers of Christ without leaving the army (into which they will have been conscripted)? Nevertheless, this was done in the New Testament, and in such a situation we can hardly ask for perfect understanding and practice at once.

This book should also make us ashamed. Ashamed that we make so little use of the opportunities we have. When we look at the difficulties of

the Underground Church, we should be shamed into being more faithful to our Lord. And if we have doubts about the conversion of soldiers or the infiltration by Christians of the secret police, we should ask ourselves: who are we, who are slack in our preaching and who are enjoying all the comforts of our civilisation; who are we to throw the first stone?

A film about Pastor Wurmbrand's experiences, also entitled "Tortured For Christ", has been made by the European Christian Mission (24 Elm Grove, London, N.8) and is being shown in various parts of Britain. We have not seen the film, but if it is only half as good as this book, we can thoroughly recommend it.

IAN MCHAFFIE.

A Modern Convert

Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus Rediscovered*. Fontana Books, 1969, 6s.

WHEN THOSE WHOSE gift it is to warm up the English language and then serve it piping hot with renewed flavour and piquancy espouse noble causes, it is often difficult for us who taste and digest to tell the real flavour from the added spice. Malcolm Muggeridge's offerings are a case in point. His "live appearances" have been criticised for being not so much a statement of faith, more a kind of performance as the listener is manipulated by subtle rhetoric and persuasive wit.

His book, mainly a collection of previously published writings, contains many scornful assertions, sweeping generalisations and much wallowing in pessimism—the latter feeling he at least has in common with Old Testament prophets and modern science-fiction writers. He views the world as besotted by materialism, debauched by sensual egocentricity, pursuing happiness through the flesh, little realising that its true fulfilment is through the spirit.

Yet not only the world, the flesh,

and the devil receive their due, but the church too, even in its spiritual death throes:—"Every so often I get asked whether it is true that I have been received into the Roman Catholic Church. It is very difficult for me to explain that the more enchanted I become with the person and teaching of Christ the farther away I feel from all institutional Christianity." "Institutional Christianity, it seems to me, is now in total disarray and visibly decomposing, to the point that, short of a miracle, it can never be put together again with any semblance of order or credibility. In their present state of decomposition the various Christian denominations are not even an impediment to Christian belief but just a joke."

The idea of Christian unity is attacked in an account of his visit to the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in Sweden: "Ecumenicalism is predominantly, I should suppose, a response to (this) sense of being about to become extinct, rather than to any zeal for union as such. The most vital elements in the Christian story have, in any case, derived from dissidence rather than agreement — St Francis, Ignatius Loyola, Luther, Pascal, Wesley, Kierkegaard, etc. etc. At Uppsala, as one clearly saw, they were able to agree about almost anything because they believed almost nothing. They reminded me of a pub turn-out in my youth, with 10 or a dozen drunks holding on to one another, swaying to and fro, but managing to remain upright. Alone they would infallibly have fallen into the gutter."

Such criticism, often repetitive and relentless, coming from someone less skilled in harnessing the English language would appear as little more than the senile outpourings of a rigid, authoritarian kill-joy, "a sated old lecher who has reacted in the classic way by becoming an angry ascetic." Yet there is something likeable in Muggeridge's iconoclasm, even if at times, with tongue in cheek, he doth protest too much. He provides a necessary corrective to obsequious liberalism.

In the final chapter, a dialogue with Roy Trevivian, we are faced not with Muggeridge the jesting journalist but Muggeridge the man and pilgrim, sometimes making progress in his quest for truth, at

other times finding that he sees through a glass darkly. We are given some hint of what the Christian faith is costing him personally. In the foreword he mentioned that "I have to disclose that since I began to try to be a Christian and endlessly talk about it the chilliness with which I have long been regarded in Establishment circles has turned into a positive ice age." Now he elaborates further: "It was necessary that my personal life should not be a disgrace to the Christian religion when I avowed it. There were certain things I had to do about my personal life. In my particular case—and I am not laying this down as any kind of rule—this involved abstemiousness and asceticism, and the mastery of self-indulgence. . . ." "I felt very strongly that I couldn't take on something for which I had such a respect as I have for the Christian religion if I was liable to disgrace it. I believe that no moral proposition is worth propounding unless it is also expressed in terms of personal conduct. If I say that all men are my brothers, the first thing I have to be sure of is that I do veritably feel them to be so, and behave accordingly. If I don't, better not to say it."

Thus it is that in this final chapter a highly personal, sometimes moving, always sincere account of his life and philosophy unfolds. We read of his father, a Chapel-spawned Socialist, of his mother, a pretty girl from a family of Sheffield steelworkers; and we learn of his attitudes to, among other things, fame, money, parenthood, marriage, divorce, poverty, mysticism, faith, Christ, the Gospels, the Church, death, doubt, and suffering.

Those who believe that man has come of age (the John Wren Lewises of this world) will find his arguments unconvincing. Yet there can be little doubt that what Malcolm Muggeridge is seeking and what he is finding leaves the reader with at least some degree of admiration for the courage of this "typical twentieth century sceptical mind," a lonely latter day Canute, rebuking the murky tide. But perhaps now is the time when the knocking has to stop, when having razed every institution to the ground, he, Malcolm Muggeridge, should not only rediscover Jesus, but begin to rebuild.

PAUL R. PEARSON.

The importance of baptism

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.

(Mark 16:15-16 R.V.)¹

These words of Jesus command attention because they speak of life and death, indeed, of eternal life and death. But what have His followers made of them?

It is clear from the Acts of the Apostles that for the early church baptism was a simple ceremony by complete immersion in a river or lake.² Soon, however, the church developed the service, though rightly continuing to give great significance to the act. Candidates were required to have longer instruction and an elder of the community would instruct a group who would subsequently be baptised together at an elaborate ceremony.

According to Cyril of Jerusalem (circa 340), the candidates for baptism were led into the vestibule of the baptistery and there, facing westward, they stretched out their hands to the west, saying, "I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy pomp, and all thy service." Then they turned round eastwards, as to the land of light and confessed the creed. Now they entered the inner room of the baptistery and divested themselves completely of their garments. They were anointed from head to foot with exorcised oil and led to the baptismal tank. Each made answer to the threefold question, if he believed in Father, Son and Holy Ghost with the prescribed formula and was submerged at each confession, three times therefore. When he had come up from the tank he was again anointed with holy oil (chrism) on the forehead, ears, nose and breast and clothed in a white garment, the outward sign of the purity from sin he had won through the sacrament. At once the procession of candidates entered the church and partook, for the first time, of the Eucharist.

Until this time the service was recognisably apostolic but, nevertheless, its true and spiritual significance was getting obscured, and the letter (rather than the full spiritual significance) was being observed. Thus many left baptism till late in life so that they might indulge in licence,³ and later gain forgiveness. At the end of the second century, infant baptism⁴ was practised only sporadically. In the latter half of the 4th century, Augustine began work on the theory of baptism by development of Paul's exposition in Romans. The influence of Augustine has effected the main body of Christendom today. Starting from the idea that baptism is for the remission of sins, this according to Augustine must include original sin inherited from Adam, as well as actual sin, and hence the necessity for the baptism of infants if they are to receive salvation, or indeed, to escape some form of perdition.⁵ This infant baptismal service was followed later in life by what is now "confirmation" for receiving of the Holy Spirit.

With the Reformation, Luther insisted on the necessity of faith to make any sacrament effective. But he seems to be quite inconsistent with regard to infant baptism. Indeed in different times in his life he argues in different ways. First, he suggested the efficacy of the faith of the sponsors, and later, that if God can turn the heart of the wicked He can certainly do the same for a child, defending his argument with Mk. 10:16. Nevertheless, from this time, sectarians, adhering to the principle of the necessity of faith, rejected infant baptism. The Anabaptists were notable for this but owing to their militant extravagancies they repelled many. However, there is little doubt that they were the prototype for the modern revival of adult baptism in several denominations, who now hold this doctrine.

What is the situation in the Christadelphian body today? Our first reaction would be to say quite clearly that we practise baptism as

the first century Christians. But a different kind of danger than that which they faced exists for us. In our zeal to denounce the false doctrine of infant baptism we may regard adult baptism as an essential rite in itself. This is to take the husk and throw away the kernel. For Paul, baptismal teaching is firmly embedded in the context of the great sacrifice that lies behind baptism—the atoning work of Christ.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5: 1)

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5: 8)

We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Rom. 5: 11)

Against this background the personal faith and obedience of a convert or disciple are declared in adult baptism. His sins are forgiven. He dies to sin to be resurrected to a new life, a life of love and service to his God, his master and his neighbour. The importance of faith cannot be over-estimated and, though faith is not a thing easily acquired, baptism should not be entered into unless the recipient is clear in his or her mind that Christ's life is the life they wish to lead. Baptism is the entrance into Christ's church.

In viewing the importance of baptism we shall naturally feel concerned at the position of the large number of people who appear to be fervent followers of Christ but have not received adult baptism. We are not concerned here with the young who are waiting the appropriate time

¹ Mark 16: 9-20 is omitted in some ancient versions and the R.S.V. But Matt 28: 19-20 is similar.

² The *Didache* insisted on running (living) water.

³ Including Constantine, who however could not be classed as licentious.

⁴ Tertullian objected to infant baptism (150-225 A.D.).

⁵ Augustine wrote: "Why should you be surprised that they (unbaptised infants) will be with the devil in eternal fire?"

to enter Christ's church, as we are sure that these are in His care; but with those who think they have been baptized when they have only received sprinkling as infants.

Are there any criteria by which at least we can attempt to arrive at some conception of what Christ's attitude may be toward them? It is sometimes argued that God calls whom He wants and causes them to receive adult baptism. But this presumes a knowledge of the ways of God. The easy argument is that Christ commanded adult baptism by immersion: to disobey is to place oneself outside the pale of salvation. This, however, is arguing according to the letter and not the spirit. We have seen that behind baptism, without which it would be only an empty rite, lies the sacrifice of Christ, our "atonement"; "but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever . . ." Thus the fundamental question is whether one accepts, in faith, the sacrifice of Christ for the atonement of one's sins. The greater the faith the more acceptable is the individual to Christ. It would be idle to say that only individuals who have received adult baptism are possessed of this faith. So we have arrived at the position where many accept, in faith, Christ and His atonement, but only a small proportion the rite by which the atonement is publicly confessed.

Let us come back to Mark 16:16. It is sometimes argued that those who have not received adult baptism cannot receive salvation because of this statement. It will be noted that Christ says, "He that believeth shall be condemned." It is therefore pertinent to ask what is meant by "belief." The Greek word is *pisteuo*, a verb. The noun *pistis* is translated "faith" 239 times and "belief" once, in the New Testament. Clearly "belief" in the N.T. means to "have faith" and not just to "accept as a fact." The former meaning describes a spiritual virtue while the latter is an intellectual one. We "accept as a fact" if the evidence is good, and reject if it is not. "Belief" in the N.T. is thus the verbal form of faith because faith has no verbal equivalent in English. The N.E.B. feels so strongly on this point that in John 3:16, it translates " . . . everyone who has faith in him

may not die but have eternal life," although this means using a noun in place of a verb and is not therefore a literal translation. This is also in line with the theme of the Epistle to the Romans, "The just shall live by faith." So Christ's statement in Mark 16:16 again becomes, on closer consideration, an acceptance, or rejection of Christ.

This passage can envisage four classes of people.

- (1) Those who accept Christ in faith, and receive adult baptism.
- (2) Those who accept Christ nominally, and receive adult baptism.
- (3) Those who accept Christ in faith but, in ignorance, receive baptism in an incorrect form, followed by confirmation.
- (4) Those who reject Christ.

Bible teaching makes it clear that it is the first class who have rightly interpreted the teaching of Christ. Both (2) and (4) are really rejectors but it is equally clear that we cannot align (3) with the rejectors. Will they therefore receive Christ's salvation? We cannot be sure that He will overlook their sin of ignorance but yet again we cannot limit His mercy. It has been pointed out that the thief on the cross was one exception. "Who then can be saved?" (Matt. 19:25). The context of this quotation shows that salvation is not granted either indiscriminately or easily. Much is required of the individual, in addition to being the recipient of the grace of God. The illustration of the Sheep and the Goats (Math. 25:31 ff.) indicates that it is a life of service rather than the following of a ritual that will determine the result. Nevertheless, it is our duty to impress on this generation the importance of adult baptism by immersion, showing that this rite demonstrates the personal and responsible acceptance of faith of the believer in the sacrificial and atoning work of Christ. It demonstrates death to the old life of sin, and a rising again to a new life of faith and service.

Thus, while pointing out the right way of baptism let us take care that, in our denouncement of the false doctrine of infant baptism we do not imply the condemnation of some of Christ's children who have, perhaps, sinned in ignorance, and who may be better men and women than you or I, lest we fall into a greater sin.

Abraham's Vision

IT IS IMPORTANT that we think about God in right ways. If, for example, we conceive God as an abstract power residing in outer space we shall be led to a very imperfect understanding of our Creator. If, like pagans in ancient times, we were to think of God as some superhuman-being, we should be wrongly limiting our concept of the Almighty. A superman-god cannot evoke respect, and an abstract god cannot arouse any emotion of thanksgiving in us. We can *know* or have some understanding of God through Jesus:

No man knoweth . . . who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.
Luke 10: 22.

In a study of the life, sayings and character of Jesus we can appreciate what may be called the *human aspects* of God, his fatherhood, his compassion and his justice.

A knowledge of God which includes only these *human aspects* it, however, inadequate. It does not account, for example, for all the reverberations in the mind of the phrase "the fear of the Lord." A responsive contemplation of the natural world can add much that is vital to our conception of God, and can help produce a correct response to the infinite power and above-earthly majesty of the one who "created the heaven and the earth." It seems to me probable that for modern man, the majestic aspect of God is more difficult to understand than it was for man in earlier times, for reasons which I shall briefly suggest. In consequence it is necessary to look afresh at some Old Testament passages, to learn to understand them as deeply as we can, and to learn from them how to feel in our minds and bodies certain emotions and sensations which are very old in human history but not, I suggest, very familiar to twentieth-century man.

It is difficult for us to be awe-inspired. Great distances and vast numbers can be mastered by modern inventions—the world has indeed grown smaller. As knowledge of the physical world increases man's sense of its wonder and mystery tends to diminish. Although it is argued that

the greater our knowledge the greater our wonder should be, this does not seem true to experience. Who, after seeing the colours in every patch of petrol spilt on the road, or the colours in a beam of light split up by a prism, will respond to the beauty of a rainbow as intensely as Noah did? Most of us live in or near towns, by the light of street lamps, amid the noise of traffic. The oppressiveness of utter darkness, or the splendour of a clear starlit night are rarely known to us, but they were experiences with which Job lived, so that God's question:

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

Job 38: 31.

was more powerful to him than to us. In the unceasing noise of the conditions of modern life, whether of factory machinery, road traffic, Radio One, or even the clock ticking in our sitting room, can we hear the "still small voice" which should speak within our very feelings? Amid the constant movement and haste of our time-regulated lives it is hard to follow the psalmist's advice:

Be still and know that I am God.
Ps. 46: 10.

We see, helped by lenses, though the telescope reduces the immensity of space to a small circle. The sight of our naked eyes is bounded by streets and buildings, and our minds are blinkered by commercial and political propaganda of many kinds. Have we then any penetrating vision?

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

Prov. 29: 18.

* * * *

The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying. Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. . . . And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; . . . And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety

that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them. . . . And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram. . . .

Gen. 15.

In these few verses are recorded details of an experience which was most significant in Abraham's life, and which remains important in the history of all mankind. The essence of the experience is Abraham's relationship with God. The physical circumstances of "a horror of great darkness" and "a burning lamp that passed between those pieces" helped induce in the body and mind of the patriarch a reverence for the Almighty and faith in him which moulded his life. We must learn to educate our feelings so that Abraham's experience of communication with God can be ours too.

Perhaps as we look at big waves breaking on a rocky coast, or, rarely, as the sun's heat feels merciless and intolerable, or, more often, as the sound of nearby thunder shakes our bodies, we can ponder the awe-inspiring power of God. The terror of the waves, the sun or the thunder can change us, at least momentarily, if we will let it, so that we feel, with physical sensations, and in our understanding, the insignificance of man relative to the familiar and, we may think, effortless demonstrations of God's creative might. This awareness of man's smallness in the sight of God will compel a faith in his promises, a dependence upon his mercy, and a hope that he will forgive our sins and redeem us with his love.

Abraham's experience was repeated, in another setting, by Isaiah. In my concluding quotation our thoughtful responses are perhaps more explicitly directed, and man's position in the cosmic purpose of God concisely epitomised:

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean

lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Isa. 6: 3-7.

Note: Although I have not used the word *numinous* to express the emotion which I have attempted to describe, my indebtedness to Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* will be obvious to all who know that book.

NEW HEARTS FOR

A life's ghost on
Borrowed life subsists.

Christian transplant:
Devoid of charity
Engaging souls—
Fool's crypt in
Gaoled emotion.
Heartless invention
Inspired futility
Jesting with hope.

Kyrie eleison.

Leprous technology devises
Macabre preservation.

Occultic success:
Plastic rebirth yet
Rupture of being.
Quest for divinity—
Synthetic spirits exult.
Traumatic union
Usurps Creator: a
Ventricular coffin!
Weary, weary of vigour.

Xoanon yearning

Yokes to senility, as
Zion weeps.

Arthur Gibson, 1969.

undisputed fact, there has so far been no general reorientation of the content of most of our lectures. Like the restaurant proprietor, we still hope that an 1890 menu will draw the 1969 crowds. There is, in fact, considerable resistance to change.

Part of this resistance springs from a misunderstanding about the nature of preaching. The Gospel, it is rightly maintained, does not change. Therefore, it is wrongly concluded, the preaching of it cannot vary at all substantially, and however unfortunate the present disinterest in religion, the fault lies essentially with the indifferent public rather than with the few preachers. This attitude betrays a misunderstanding about the nature of preaching. No one has ever preached effectively simply by presenting what, to him, is the essence of the Gospel. The effective preacher selects from his broad knowledge what is appropriate to his audience. If it consists of children, he will speak quite differently from what he would say to adults. A missionary to a tribe hardly touched by modern Western influence will present something quite different from the preaching of a minister in a sophisticated city suburb. If we fail to adjust our preaching message to a changing world, we are simply not doing our duty to our Lord, but stultifying His Gospel through our lack of sense.

A still more substantial source of resistance to fundamental changes in the content of our preaching arises from the situation in our Sunday evening lectures. Very often no visitors are present, so that the preacher is addressing our own members and young people. The

audience expects something suitable to themselves, perhaps forgetting that if the average outsider were to come in the address would be almost unintelligible. Conversely a presentation of the Gospel suitable for an ordinary person of today might not be very rewarding for our own members. This should not be surprising, for Paul's address to the philosophical Athenians would have got a very poor reception had the Apostle delivered it to the saints in Jerusalem. It has been the sad experience of some in our community who have tried hard to think up relevant presentations of the unchanging Gospel for today to discover that the members present took objection to the effort as not sufficiently appealing to themselves. Perhaps Arranging Brethren might give more attention to this problem, and set aside particular Sundays either for preaching to visitors or for services of a kind better suited to our own members. At present the brother ministering is supposed to be preaching the Gospel, but he knows that probably few or no outsiders will be present.

However, the greatest problem of all is that so far it has not appeared that anything like enough attention has been given to thinking out the implications of the Gospel for the modern world. What should we say to those young people who find the modern world too materialistic? Do we agree, or do we not? And if we agree that material possessions are becoming too important a part of life, what are we doing about it? Until we have really answered these questions for ourselves and acted upon our answers we are in no position to speak to others in the name of

Christ. In addition to these practical issues there are also the more intellectual aspects. What arguments should be used today to defend our Faith to those who have none at all? In our next issue we hope to carry an article which will open up consideration of some aspects of these problems.

FIRCROFT 1970

Our Summer School will be held (D.V.) from 1st to 8th August 1970. Further details in the next issue.

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