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# TWICE- CONQUERING LOVE

**Geoffrey C. Bingham**



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## FOREWORD

### THE LOVE THAT REALLY LOVES

OVER the years I have written a number of books on love. This is not to be wondered at, since love is the primary thing in all of human life and experience. This is because 'love is of God', that is, all love comes from God and God only, as the Apostle John once wrote. Twice he said, 'God is love,' and this is perhaps the simplest statement of the matter, and also the most profound. Each time I have written a book on love, the ideas that come seem to be fresh, and sometimes different. One might ask, 'Why write more than one book on love?' The question is reasonable, yet the fact is that love is all-embracing since God is all of love. New insights, new discoveries, new experiences will always be flowing from the love of God, for that is His nature. This is a simple reason and justification for yet another book on love.

For some months I have been unashamedly writing a book on the theology of love. A theologian once said that love is the most theological thing of all. Only a certain type of reader likes to read books that are wholly theological. Every so often folk tell me, 'Your books are difficult to read and understand.' I accept this impression, although to my own mind they seem simple enough. Some writers have the ability to write easily read books on theological subjects. I trust that they write with the depth true theology requires. In my own case there are certain books I have written which go on selling because most readers seem to understand them, and feel that they have personal application to their lives.

Having completed my book on the theology of love, I still

wished to communicate the living substance of that book for those who find theological reading difficult. Since most people find my stories—whether fact or fiction—easily readable, I thought I would write a book of short stories, some fact, some fiction, which would bring through in a simple way the living theology of love. Having lived for over seventy years means I have had numberless experiences of love myself, have been in innumerable situations of love, and so have a fund of stories which might be said to be inexhaustible. The difficulty in writing this present volume was to keep it to a reasonable size.

The thrust of the book is to show that there is human love, and there is Divine love. God is love: Man is made in the image of God, that is, the image of Love, so that he is essentially constituted as a creature of love. Had he not rebelled against God, had he not fallen, and had he not separated himself from his Creator, then he would have loved with a pure love. This he does not do, for all human love is tainted, even though sometimes it shows itself in rather wonderful acts and ways. Sometimes human love is also shown in terrible, cruel and utterly selfish ways. The love of God is shown in the fact that He never deserted Man, and planned the incarnation of His Son in order to bring life and love afresh to His creatures, thus bringing them back to the richness of true love.

Human beings are often deceived into thinking that love which springs from themselves can be pure. This present volume seeks to show that this is not the case. Even so, God has so moved that His love, which is known by Christians as *agape* (a Greek word for love), can become the experience of human beings. This *agape* transcends fallen human love, which is sometimes known by the Greek word *eros*. *Eros* in all its forms of noble actions—giving to others, being a friend, and so on—must be seen as a good thing. There is the love of man and woman, love that we call marital, familial and social, and all such forms are fine and proper, yet if they do not flow from the pure love of God, they are always defective. *Eros* has behind it the drive of getting something for what it gives, even if it often seems that this is not really the case. *Agape* is pure love, not giving to get, but just giving which is unmotivated by any form of selfishness.

I am sure many of us think *eros* is *agape*, and *agape* is *eros*. That is what this book is about—showing the fallacy of *eros* and the sheer wonder and glory of *agape*. I hope that my writing shows my admiration for much that is *eros*, but primarily my hope is that many will seek to know the best of love which is *agape*.

When, then, we speak of ‘Twice-Conquering Love’ in this book, we mean that *eros* is very powerful. It is so strongly human, because its source is wholly human. It may well be that it is Divine love (*agape*) humanised to become *eros*. Whatever the case, it certainly conquers men and women; yet *agape* makes its way to the very ‘secret heart’ of a person and there defeats *eros*—the human love. God as love is revealed and so brings a person to the knowledge and experience of *agape*—‘twice-conquering love’.

I hope that the stories, whilst being entertaining, will convey the richness and desirability of such love, true love, God Himself in action in our lives.

*Geoffrey Bingham*

## THE GOLDEN EGG OF LOVE

**T**HERE was once an illustrious and noble prince, famed not only for his prowess as a warrior, his outstanding regality of mind and body, but mostly for his desire to be the most beloved of all monarchs, the most loving of all creatures. As a child he dedicated his life to search out love—love of the highest order, and such love that the world would be not only amazed at it, but transformed by it. Such love would remove all hatred, all cruelty, and bring dignity to humanity in a way it had not hitherto known it. Night and day the boy-prince dreamed of this, and in every possible way he prepared himself for the task which lay ahead of him. He had no doubts about his quest and goal, and was certain he would one day achieve it.

Such people are often blind to other elements of life which are about them, but this young person was most perceptive. He noticed, for example, that whilst most admired him for his natural beauty and his high intelligence, others hated him because of these very things. He decided not to pander to those who hated him, or to those who idolised him. In every way he sought to remain humble, and to equip himself in every kind of art which would help him to achieve his aspiration, will and wish.

In those ancient days things which we today call mythological somehow mingled with what we call reality, but the human beings and superhuman beings seemed to live in much the same world, and none showed surprise at the other. A human being might aspire to ascend to where superhuman creatures live, and some of these high forms of life would wish to mingle with ordinary humans. Out of their meetings and intercourse strange stories and legends grew.

One of the legends was that the true love to which the prince

aspired was contained in a great golden egg. The egg was not simply golden in colour but actually gold itself. Within it lay pure love, untarnished by human generation, and yet laid by some supernal creature whose last and painful act was to bring the egg into being. The proof and sign of its authentic love-being was that a creature had given his or her life in bringing the egg into the universe.

It was said of the egg that it could not bring forth life but by the warmth and love of a human creature who would persist in sitting upon it—as any hen does upon her egg—until the day it would break and love would manifest itself to the world. Naturally, many creatures—human and otherwise—scoffed at the very idea, but there were those who did not. Indeed, in the great universities of the day the whole matter was debated backwards and forwards, and some became great doctors of learning as they shared the disquisitions of the wise older men—men who had carried ancient wisdom down to their own days. These keepers of the wisdom of love insisted that there could be no end to the pain and suffering caused by supernal and human conflicts until the myth of the golden egg was fulfilled.

The young prince, as we have said, practised every art available to him. He learned how to use the weapons of assault, as he knew the egg may have been taken by some mythical creature such as a fire-breathing dragon or a creature-eating giant, and that he might have to destroy whoever had come to possess the egg. He learned the art of speaking with intelligence, since he might have to persuade with the artistry of brilliance some one or thing which would not otherwise surrender its treasure. He sat at the feet of the ancient wise men, sages whose sapiency would lead him to the ultimate lair of love.

He lacked no companions. Many of his peers wished to go with him on his pilgrimage of love, but when the day came for that, he waved all aside and, seated on a horse as noble almost as himself, he went forth to find true love. His mind and conscience had long ago informed him that in this world true love—wholly authentic love—is never found in gods and human beings. Somehow—perhaps at the beginning of their history—all creatures had become tainted with a love that was self-regarding,

self-saving and self-extending. This, he knew, caused much of the confusion found in the universe, and was at the root of cruelty, selfishness, pain and suffering, and therefore could not be genuine love. Thus he had had to train himself, and allow himself to be trained by the wise ancients, both men and women, who themselves yearned for the emergence of pure love. For a long time the human race had dreamed of such pure love, but it had not yet appeared. Many doctors of wisdom believed the story of the golden egg was a myth—something conceived in the minds of gods and human creatures but which, in fact, did not exist in reality.

The wanderings and excursions of this powerful and noble prince are well known in the annals of mythical history. These stories and fables tell of the time he dismounted from his horse and became as a commoner, turned into a hermit, sought the company of mythical creatures who could lead him to his goal and help him fulfil his destiny. They tell of his battles with cruel and dark giants, with fire-breathing, draconian beasts which all but devoured him. Time and again he was on the edge of death, but life came back and he lived as by a miracle. Then one day he was told of a mysterious mountain on which dwelt a prince such as himself, one who had discovered the golden egg and was at this moment even seeking to hatch it out.

The young prince could not contain his feelings, much less understand them. He felt helpless that another should have arrived before him. He dreaded the thought that the person who had discovered the egg might be unworthy to tend to love when it was born in all its purity into this strange and unhappy universe. It was at one of those stages of his pilgrimage when he was seated again upon his magnificent steed that he considered this, and it gave him courage to search for and discover the ancient mountain on which his fellow prince sat in such expectancy.

His toils through woods and jungles, through gorges of magnificent beauty and proportions, made it difficult for him to hasten. At night he would hear the creatures which urged him to turn back and abandon his search, so hopeless would it prove, but he sternly rebuked the voices which spoke to him from outside and those which had pierced to the centre of his brain. Not

for nothing had he prepared himself down through the years. Now it was his great moment, and nothing could alter him.

It was at the opening of one dawn that he achieved his arrival at the great mountain. He saw the sun rise in fiery manner behind the hill, and then a golden glow spread through all things, and he espied, as though infinitesimally tiny, a creature seated upon something that fitted his seating so well. He guessed it was the prince and the golden egg. He had not anticipated that it would take him days to reach the crown of the mountain from the time of that glowing dawn, but as a certain evening was drawing to its sunset he emerged into an opening in the forest where a person of noble countenance and mien sat contemplatively upon the golden egg of love. For some moments the pilgrim prince stared in awe and wonder, emotion after emotion passing over him, like waves that pass over one another as they approach the shores of their destinations.

There was no movement from the other princely creature, and so the pilgrim prince withdrew to the forest to contemplate the matter and devise some form of action. Of one thing he was certain: it was his destiny to incubate the egg of love until love was loosed into his world. Yes, it was his destiny and not that of another. This other noble creature upon the egg must surely have been preparing the event for him, but he would not be the one to accomplish it. Even so, his own thoughts troubled him, and when he emerged from the forest the next day his conscience was not wholly clear: he was still uneasy in his mind and spirit. Nevertheless, he approached the glory of the golden egg and the quiet one who brooded silently over it.

For a long time he considered the marvel before him. The person before him did not lift his eyes to the noble prince who now confronted him. Nor when that prince spoke did he raise his eyes even to glance at him.

The prince from the forest said, 'Greetings, oh fellow prince! Greetings to you, and your present work!'

It was as though the person on the egg considered what was said. With his gaze still lowered he answered, 'Greetings to you, my brother, my friend, my fellow being.'

The prince who had come from afar seated himself upon a

convenient rock which was embedded in the tall waving grass, and the flowers which were blooming in the sward. After a silence that came between them, he said, 'I have come to take your place, and to seat myself upon the egg. I will bring love to the world. It is my destiny.'

The other prince shook his head slightly. 'I, too, think it is my destiny. I do not think it is you who will sit upon this egg and hatch out the new destiny for mankind and the universe.'

All his life the first prince—the traveller one—had thought of this as his destiny, and that it belonged to none else. He felt a line of anger growing within him. He knew it to be righteous anger. His indignation was growing.

'Unseat yourself, I pray you,' he said, trying to keep his voice calm. 'It is high time I fulfilled my destiny.'

'Destiny is given,' said the quiet, noble man. 'We do not take destiny upon us. Only out of true destiny can come true love, and only out of true love can come destiny.'

The traveller felt indignation rising in his voice. 'For this hour I have come,' he said. 'Indeed, it is for this hour that I was born.'

The other nodded his head. 'Doubtless that is so,' he agreed, 'but what that destiny may be we may not rightly know until the moment of its fulfilment.'

The other felt a pang of fear, and it was born of awe—awe at the quiet authority of the one who spoke. Nevertheless his own anger debated the words of wisdom he was hearing. He remembered all the words of wisdom he had heard from sapient mortals, those who carried with them the accumulated wisdom of the ages, and he felt emboldened.

'I ask you—nay, I require you—to descend,' he said, and he felt the grandeur of his own authority.

'Never!' said the other prince. 'Never! I am here to do the bidding of love and I shall not yield.'

The prince on the forest sward felt wrath, wrath beyond mere anger, and it was rising like a turbulent tide. His anger could only be righteous—he knew that.

He drew his sword from its scabbard. With this he had fought wild beasts; with this he had defeated scurrilous men in the

course of holy duty; with this he had rescued captives from terrible tyranny. Now he would unseat this impostor, and be the apostle of love to a world ridden with cruelty and selfishness.

He brandished his sword. 'I warn you!' he cried. 'I am the one who has been sent to bring love which will emancipate the whole world!'

When he looked up, the man on the egg was smiling gently. 'In this way you would promote love?' he asked. 'In this way you would flood the world with peace and love?'

For a moment the prince with the sword hesitated. For one dark, awful instant doubt broke into his mind, but he knew it was faith which would bring love, and he must keep faith with his destiny. He rushed up the slope towards the prince and the egg, and in his fury was trusting the other prince would move in fear, vacate his place of seating, and give it over to him. His whole inner being ached with the desire and insistence upon his destiny: to be the liberator of love to the universe.

To this point the prince on the golden egg had not raised his eyes. He did now as the other prince drew back his sword, ready to plunge it into the heart of the one he believed to be an interloper. Surprise and wonder leapt into his own eyes as the conqueror prince stared at one who was no stranger to him. Though he was not a stranger, yet, too, he was not his friend. Yet, again, he was his friend, and so his own hand wavered as he sought to draw out a response from the other who regarded him silently, and without hate. That other held no sword, no dagger, no weapon. His only defence was his eyes, and his gaze of immense wisdom, the very wisdom of love. He held no fear: if anything, there was a look of sorrow, but that sorrow was calm.

'Unseat! Unseat!' cried the prince, as he held his sword aloft.

'Be calm! Be calm!' said the other man. 'Give way to peace! Give way to love!'

The fury of this newly come opponent knew no bounds. It was far beyond harnessing.

'I will be liberator!' he cried, and with that he plunged his sword into the heart of the other man.

As he did this he looked deeply into the eyes of the unresisting

keeper of the golden egg, and sudden dread seized him as he knew he was looking into his own eyes. It was he—himself—whom he was killing. He gasped with the terror mounting within him, and he cried out his horror in wails that went floating through the air like banners of mortal pain.

There was death upon the egg, the death of his *alter ego*, his true self, the appointed guardian and harbinger of love.

His sword clattered to the ground. He fell beside the dying prince, and lifted his head to look into his eyes—beautiful and unrepenting as they were—to ask forgiveness, to seek pity, to bring back to new being the life that was ebbing, life that might truly have been his own.

The dying prince whispered, 'Had you not worshipped love you may have had opportunity to bring it to us all. Now you have forfeited that right. Had you truly understood love you would never have done this thing. Forgive you? Yes, I do, but your own destiny you have forfeited. Love alone can liberate love.'

The prince still living felt the withdrawal of pain and hurt from the dying of the other. His death was a thing of love itself. Then there was only silence across that vale: a quietness that forbade all movement, even the movement of thought.

In bewilderment the living prince turned to the golden egg. It was slowly cracking, and its shining pieces fell away as though of tawdry straw, lacking substance, lacking reality. Looking within, the prince saw to his horror a fledgling serpent, a curious, unholy creature that looked at him from beady eyes. There was nothing grand about this thing. Its very movements were repulsive.

A thin, reedy voice spoke to the disenchanted and horrified prince. 'So you have given birth to me,' it said. 'Yet this is not birth. This—as I am—you always were. Human pride is as a serpent, and serpent as human pride. Now we are one—you and I. As for love'—there was a sneer in the reptile's voice—'that is far from us both.'

They both looked back to where the egg had been. Its fragments had dissolved. They looked towards the dead prince, but his body had vanished, melted, as it were, into the forest glade and gone beyond it.

It was more with sorrow than terror the moment of realisation came to the prince. His nobility had faded when the other had gone. He knew now what he had never known or thought to acknowledge, that the depravity of the human heart is deepest when at its noblest.

He lifted his head and cried to the mountain and to the forest, and to all the universe. 'None of us is a saviour! None of us can bring love to this world! The love we think is love is no love at all! Love cannot come from us! It must be brought to us by some one from somewhere; but then who will be that one, and from whence will he come?'

The reptile put its head to the ground, disliking the voice that had liberated it from the golden shell. It slid into the darkness of the forest.

The voice of the defeated prince rang through the trees, ascended high into the air, and resounded—it seemed—throughout the entire universe.

There was no answer, no response. It seemed that all was silent. The cries echoed back into the mind and heart and spirit of the once noble prince, but from him—as for him—there could be no answer. Indeed, it seemed that all human wisdom could give no answer, yet in his heart he protested that this could not be so; must not be so. Otherwise all were doomed.

## AH, TIDE OF LOVE

Ah, tide of love that floods my heart,  
That flows to me from Your dear Throne,  
That finds its way through all my wastes,  
Until it makes me all Your own;  
Ah, dear, dear tide that floods my heart  
And makes me Yours—one holy part.

Ah, tide of love that brings Your peace  
And calms the jangled heart of pain,  
That floods the joy that heaven knows  
Across my parched and needy plains;  
Ah, love and joy and peace that flow  
And cause me all Your heart to know.

Ah, Face of love that smiles upon  
The anguished spirit filled with guilt,  
That sets it free and makes it strong,  
And washes clean all memory's silt;  
Ah, pain that floods our hearts with love,  
That draws us by Your Cross above.

Ah, glorious love that formed the plan  
To win the nations far and wide,  
To kill all hatred, ban all wars,  
And heal all wounds—for this He died.  
We watch Your love through all our pain,  
Till we are wholly one again.

Ah, Father-love, ah, Spirit-peace,  
Ah, gentle Brother, Warrior strong—  
You teach us ways that Heaven knows  
And fill our hearts with glorious song.  
You stand upon the heav'nly shore  
And call us home—for evermore.

## A STORY OF TWO LOVES

THEY were two friends, these young boys. They had met in their early teenage years, and both loved life, though each in his different way. The first of the two boys—Leonard by name—thought of himself as a philosopher, and he would spend hours talking about the world, why it was in existence, what was its purpose, and the place of the human race within it. This boy was tall, thin, bony, dark in features, and had large luminous eyes that glowed with his passion for discussion. He also had a smile which was marvellously attractive, especially when a new thought came swimming into the orbit of his mind. His face would screw up asymmetrically, as though he concealed enormous humour in its curious twist.

By contrast, his friend Jonathan was shorter, fair, with unruly blond hair and blue eyes, much more athletic, with a tendency to question the brilliant philosophy of his friend, but more excitable when it came to talking about the world, the human race, and themselves in particular. He had the idea in his mind that he, Jonathan, and his pal Leonard, were one day going to mean much in this world, and to this world. Len, he thought, would be professor in one of the great universities, and folk would flock from many places to hear him. In both their own country—Australia—and in other countries, people would read the written works of Leonard Adams. Leonard was not so sure this would be the case, but for the present he was always eager to debate Jonathan's ideas about God, the universe and human life.

Jonathan Hirst had more a bent for theology than philosophy, but he agreed these two subjects were somehow linked. After the hours they spent together at a boys' club, they would walk backwards and forwards to each other's homes, debating the things

they thought were so important. The tall one would question his own philosophy professor's ideas and Jonathan would agree with him, his reasons being mainly theological. Later—in the years following the world war in which they both fought—they would remember those endless discussions and wonder what they had all been about.

The circumstances of life parted them: Leonard, having filled out into a taller, stronger person, joined the Intelligence Corps, whilst Jonathan, who had also grown taller and even more athletic, joined the infantry—commonly known as 'the footsloggers'. The two young men fortunately survived the war, but did not meet for many years. Leonard had become a clerk in the Department of Statistics in Canberra, and Jonathan had taken up a Soldiers' Settlement block in the New England District of New South Wales. It was at the annual Anzac Day march in Sydney that they met almost by accident. They met in a pub, Leonard being on his own, and Jonathan with members of his unit. Of them, he alone was drinking lemonade, but nobody commented on this fact. Their comradeship was too strong for that.

The two old friends had one thing in common—the war. On this they could talk quite easily, swapping adventures and other happenings. Leonard had been made a captain and had stopped there. Jonathan had remained in the ranks, a simple infantryman. Leonard was not a heavy drinker, but he needed some stimulant to break down his reserves. Jonathan had remained a somewhat easy-going person, so that without alcohol he could talk freely. In an amazing kind of way they found themselves back in their youthful mode of debate.

Jonathan said, 'I guess you found that brilliant system of philosophy worked—the one which early on gave you the answer to life. I imagine your war days would have filled that out—established it, so to speak.'

The soft, luminous eyes of Leonard's youth had hardened to a sort of brilliance in which there was no gentleness. He had a curl to his lip and a note of sarcasm in his voice. 'What a bunch of nongs those lecturers were—and are!' he said. 'I finished my Uni course after the war but have had no stomach for that sort of thing. No; philosophy has no answer.' He stared down at his drink.

Jonathan felt a mixture of disappointment and pleasure. He was disappointed because he had hoped Leonard would have made it in life as a great thinker. His pleasure was from the thought that he would not have to tread the path his friend had trod. He could dispense with that kind of wisdom.

He asked eagerly, 'What conclusions did you come to when you were in the war—in action?'

Leonard grinned. 'Oh, I was just what I am now, not much more than a pen-pusher. We were away back at Corps Headquarters. You know, they do nothing of any great consequence there. Necessary no doubt, but I found most of it boring. Maps and codes and dispositions to deal with, but we were generally out of the sound of guns. I finished up in an underground Intelligence complex in England.'

'But you must have observed something,' Jonathan said with enthusiasm. 'You must have been driven to see what human beings are, and understand them in a new way.' It was more a question than a statement.

'The most thinking I ever did,' said Len with a grin, 'was to think about women. I just needed them to fulfil some emotional desire I knew I had. I guess the only drive I knew was that of *eros*.'

Jonathan knew the word '*eros*', but he ignored its mention. 'But you must have thought things through—the war, who men fight, the tragedies of war and the post-war.'

Len said, 'Statistics can be quite stimulating if you give yourself to them, and they certainly help me to pass the time, but they do not turn me on.' His eyes lost some of their brilliance. 'Nothing turns me on,' he said, and Jonathan detected a note of bitterness.

His mind flashed back to the vigorous enthusiasms they had shared as they wandered the lush green dairy paddocks in their old Sydney semi-rural suburb.

FOR a time they forgot their thinking about human beings and life, and swapped memories of their youthful days, and their days in war. Some drinks later, Leonard opened up.

'You know,' he said, 'I married before we left for the Middle East. You remember Alma—Jean's sister?'

Jonathan nodded and felt embarrassed. He had been fond of Jean but had long ago forgotten her. Leonard had obviously persisted with his teenage relationship.

'It was a bit rushed,' Leonard said, 'but it was good. I got leave and we had a time down in the Kangaroo Valley, spending the week on a farm in a house that was lent to us. Our young Ronald was conceived there. After that I went on the *Queen Mary* to Greece, escaped from the German Army and landed in the desert. Then it was off to England for the rest of the war.'

He picked up his drink and looked into it, and then held it at eye-level, and tried to peer through it. 'Alma got caught up with the Yanks, and had what she called a good time. She was pregnant when I arrived home. After a while Ronald had a sister, little Jane.'

He sipped at his beer.

Jonathan had a cold, heavy feeling in the pit of himself. 'You stayed with Alma?' he asked.

His friend nodded. 'Not that we have much to do with each other,' he said. 'We just go our own ways, have our own friends. We try to keep up appearances for the children's sakes.'

The infantryman ordered another soft drink and brought back a whisky for his old mate. He saw the hard look in the other man's eyes. He felt almost guilty about his own marriage to Kate. It had turned out so well.

For something to keep the conversation going, he said, 'I guess this is where we have to forgive and forget, and remake our relationships.'

Again he felt guilty: it sounded a bit like a cliché, although he hadn't meant it that way. He and Kate had made it from the beginning. They were 'hand-in-glove', as the old saying had been. Right now she was handling the children along with the sheep and the cattle fat-stock. She liked him to meet his mates in Sydney on Anzac Day.

Leonard was ignoring his remark, but in fact he was showing a flicker of interest. 'When I was doing philosophy,' he said, 'we came across the old Greek idea of *eros*.' He grinned faintly. 'The Greeks didn't see *eros* just as the man-woman thing, even if it included that. They saw it as a pretty high kind of love, even

the sort of thing you sometimes saw in the Army when a man would give his life for a friend.'

He had a wry look which Jonathan knew to be cynical. Leonard went on, 'Not too sure too many thought about their mates when it came to the pinch. I've seen men with my own eyes who left their mates in danger just to escape it themselves.'

Jonathan had seen the other side in the infantry. Maybe the base wallahs, like Leonard, had seen the worst side of things. 'I saw some pretty good things,' he said shortly. 'Guys who risked their lives for their mates.'

'It happens,' his tall friend agreed. 'That's what the Greeks called *eros*. Of course, they had other good ideas linked with *eros*. I guess that's what they called "love".' He mused a little. 'I guess we call it love, too.'

'Man has to love,' the young farmer said. 'He couldn't live without it.'

'Of course,' the Canberra man said. 'Of course. Even I love Alma, though most of me hates her guts. I try to let the kids see the *eros* side.'

'And Alma?' asked Jonathan.

'Ambivalent,' was the reply. Leonard grinned wryly. 'That was a word I learned before the war. I learned it under our professor. We thought those words pretty good. We did psychology and were sure we knew all there was to know about human beings.'

He pushed his glass backwards and forwards between his two hands. The glass was as empty as his eyes. He sighed heavily and said, '*Eros* is a fake.'

Kate's husband felt a cold shaft of air on his heart. 'No one's human without it,' he said. 'Life would be nothing without love.'

The man who had been in Intelligence nodded. 'You're right,' he said. 'Life without love is nothing.'

He leaned forward, and stared into Jonathan's eyes. He put a hand on his friend's right wrist. 'Johnny,' he said, 'do you still read the poets?'

Jonathan started at the use of the old name. They had been 'Johnny' and 'Len' before, and in special times, 'Nathan' and 'Leon'. Some of the old warmth and the old idealism crept back

into his heart. 'Yes, I read the poets. I read the ones we did at high school—the Lakes poets—and I read our Australian ones. What's more, I write sometimes for the little magazines.' He felt flushed when he finished his confession.

Len said, 'Johnny, do you remember good old Byron and his *Don Juan*?

' "In her first passion woman loves her love,  
In all the other all she loves is love."

'I think that just about sums up my case—and Alma's. The first love is over, and it was the only one that was any good, but then it was not really love, was it?'

Jonathan said, 'I remember a little of the same poem. I think it went this way:

' "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,  
'Tis woman's whole existence."

'I guess Alma is still looking for what she hopes she might get.' The farmer wondered whether he had said too much, and that his old friend might be angry with him. Then he noticed some of the hardness had gone from the other man.

Leonard, for his part, leaned forward. '*Eros* is a strange thing,' he said, and there was a bit of mystery in his voice. 'We all want to be loved, and none of us is at peace until we love, but it always goes astray. It never works.' His hand thumped the polished cedar bar. He saw disbelief in Jonathan's eyes, and he thumped harder.

'Just look out, Johnny,' he said. 'Everything is OK with you now, and your family maybe. But the day will come when *eros* will wear thin, and you'll be the loser. We are always losers with *eros*. It's a fake. It's a con. In the end it doesn't work. And do you know why? Because *eros* always wants its pound of flesh. It gives in order to get. In fact, it will give anything in order to get. And when it doesn't get it, then it becomes very angry. All the sugar goes off the pill and it is bitter at the centre.'

Johnny was thinking, 'What a cynic! You are a man disappointed in *eros*, yourself,' and he tried to keep his thoughts from his old friend Len, but Len wasn't looking at him. His right hand

was restlessly circling, glass in hand, as though he would encapsulate something within its orbit. 'Romance is the devil,' he was saying. 'Women! Well, there's always magic with them, but when it's over the magic is gone, and then its cover is blown. There is nothing satisfying in any of it.'

'What about the fellows?' Johnny said, indicating with a hand the men who were drinking further up the bar. They were wearing their war-service ribbons. Some of them were even in their old service uniforms, as though they were back in the Army or the Navy or the Air Force. Some were shouting, others talking in slurred speech. Some were angry, but on the whole there was bonhomie.

Leonard wriggled a little. He was uneasy. Johnny guessed he rarely, if ever, opened up his thoughts as he was doing now. He could feel rancour and bitterness, like corrosive acids, seeping out of the man. He himself had had it good. Kate was always in the mists of love, and the children seemed to like their family acts of affection. Perhaps there were things ahead of them that were not so good. He scrubbed his mind at that thought.

Len was answering his question. 'The men are OK,' he was saying, 'and so are the women, for all that. It is just that we seem to be born with something inside us that wants to be satisfied, and sex doesn't do that.'

Johnny knew he wasn't really talking about sex but about loyalty, about personal affection, about unity of two persons—two becoming one, and not just in the bed. He knew of men and women who cursed the bed.

Len was saying, 'I like to meet the fellows on Anzac Day. I even like going along to the RSL Club weekly, but all of that doesn't blot out the past or make it new. You always have to live with your past or you are no human being.' Johnny wondered whether his friend was quoting from something he had learned or read.

Suddenly Len said it. 'There's got to be something better than *eros*. There's got to be something more than *eros*. You can trace just about every evil, every horrible thing, even every war down to wretched *eros*. We go about giving what we have and yet behind it we are trying to get, and when we don't get, we're not just miserable, we become demonic. Our rage drives us on to all sorts of things.'

'At least,' thought Jonathan, 'he looks alive again. He was dead when I met him.' He wasn't sure whether the tears in the other man's eyes were of rage or just the alcohol working.

'Look!' he said to Leonard. 'Why don't you bring Alma up to see us? Bring her and the kids. You'll all like it. Anyway, it will be different. We have plenty of room in our ranch-house, and young Ronny and Jane will

have the time of their lives with our kids. It is not as though you don't both know Kate. You remember; we all used to go to church together, and they used to barrack for us in the cricket and the football.'

'I'll think about it,' Leonard said, when Johnny had given him the phone number and the Walcha farm address. He fished out a card from somewhere with his Department's number and postal address.

The men at the other end of the bar were beginning to sing. There were old songs such as, 'Roll out the Barrel', 'Lillie Marlene', 'Kiss me Goodnight, Sergeant Major' and 'Now is the Hour'. They brought back a lot of memories to the two mates of former years. Len hesitated, as though he would join the men. Johnny knew he had to leave soon for the farm.

They both shook hands. Both remembered the nights they had discussed the world's problems. Love had seemed real then, and now it seemed like a mystery to one, and becoming uncertain to the other.

The last thing Johnny said was, 'I reckon there's something better than the old Greek *eros*. Better even than that,' and he pointed to the men at the bar. 'I reckon there's genuine love. I reckon there must be.' He knew his friend did not believe him: cynicism had killed belief.

Len turned his eyes from the rollicking men and stared at him, and pain had come into his eyes. When he went, Johnny was sorry for the pain, but he kept thinking that maybe it was the first sign of returning life. He had no way of knowing, but he kept hoping Len and his family would make it to Walcha. For the rest, well, he just could not be sure.

## THE VIRGIN

**H**ARRY Treglown is a man I admire. I suppose I admire him more than most other men. Probably this is because he has influenced my life more than others. My own father died when I was young, and I felt a bit lost. Our family had a general store in a country town, and so we knew most of the folk both in the town and on the surrounding farms, and my father was regarded by all as a good man. My mother felt his going deeply, but she kept at the work of the shop, and two of my sisters—both younger than I—helped with that when they were not at school. My father was always a busy man, and we had little time for relational closeness and affection, but I always remember him with warmth.

Even before my father died, I had made Harry Treglown a sort of a hero. He had been to the Second World War, had been decorated for valour in the field, and along the way had accumulated a kind of wisdom which I greatly admired. I just liked him, and his wife and his three sons. The sons did very well, one of them becoming a noted journalist, another a person in some high position in the bureaucracy in Canberra, and another well established on a farm down in Naracoorte in the south-east of South Australia. I used to make deliveries to the Treglown farm in the store utility if there was an emergency, especially when the three sons were in Adelaide in college and university.

Harry Treglown's grandparents had been in the community of miners which came from Cornwall in the nineteenth century. His own family had been first at Moonta and Kadina on the Yorke Peninsula, and when the copper was worked out there, the younger ones had gone to Broken Hill. Today there are still plenty of Treglowns in that Silver City.

Harry had opted for the land south of Wakefield, and his patch of country was good dairy land. He had gone to the war in his

early twenties, and when he came home married another Cornish descendant, and set up his farm with some post-war assistance from the Repatriation Department. In some ways he had shown himself to be eccentric, in that he insisted on milking by hand, in still using the great Clydesdale draught horses to farm his crops, and the lighter horses for rounding up the mob for milking. This was until his sons insisted firmly that he catch up with this century's modes of farming, as they were in the sixties. He still kept a couple of Clydesdales out of sheer love of them, and he still drove his stock on a horse. For all that, he was good enough, too, on a trail bike.

I SUPPOSE I took him over as a father after my Dad died. His sons had almost moved out by that time. My own sisters were growing up and were a bit of a mystery to me. They were well liked by the fellows of my age, and because our store was central to the life of the town, they were much in demand by most awkward males of their age. Of course, Harry Treglown was well known in the town, and for some years was the President of our Shire. When his wife died, he retired from that, but kept at his farming. He showed a few eccentric ways after her death, but I guess that was to be expected. He still kept at farming and breeding his stud Friesians. He used to take off plenty of ribbons in the Annual District Show and even in the Adelaide one.

It is clear to me, in retrospect, that he had a high regard for me, and an affection that was no less than that for his sons, but probably more personal and intimate. From about the age of fourteen I had gone to him with my troubles and the problems which seemed quite gigantic to me, but these were generally dissolved with a few of his chuckles and some simple advice.

One of the times I remember most was when I talked to him about sex. Looking back, I am not sure I could ever have talked to my father about the matter, had he lived, and, as it was, I was awkward and bumbling even with Harry Treglown. I guess I had the problems every teenage boy has, particularly one with a vivid imagination at the time of changes in the body; and so on. I can remember there would be vivid fantasies also. Yet it was about my sisters Nina and Nita that I was troubled. The boys were

around them like the proverbial bees at the honey pot, and I was a bit scared for them. I knew most of what we called ‘the facts of life’, but I wondered how they would have handled those things. My mother was wise enough, and her dry humour and comments protected them as far as a mother can.

I think it was the ethics of sex that concerned me. I had always been sensitive about the ethics of business, and knew Harry was as sensitive when it came to the ethics of farming. I remember that on this particular day we sat on the verandah, looking across the farm at the ridge of old gums and the oats in the undulating cultivation paddocks that were almost ready for cutting and for baling into hay. Harry lived most of life on that verandah since his wife Marie had died. Even so, he kept the house scrupulously tidy—just the way she used to have it—and I suspected it made her almost as though still present to him. Anyway, it was a kind of tribute to the life they had shared together.

‘I RECKON sex is a silly word,’ Harry said. ‘It really doesn’t explain anything. Words like “affection”, “passion” and “love” make sense immediately. There is something alive and moving about them. The word “sex” seems to cover what happens to men and women in bed, or—these days—in the back of a car, maybe. We talk about “opposite sexes” when we mean “different genders”. The new fad of teaching sex in the schools is almost a matter of biology. This is the sort of thing people see on a farm, or maybe in the street when dogs are on heat. Little do some know there is a beautiful world beyond the promiscuous one.’

‘When I was your age I used to wonder about it, and my father told me not to worry, that what was natural would happen, and in a way it is all as instinctive to the human race as it is to the animals. My own parents were decent Methodist types—highly moral, and pretty contented with each other. Church on Sunday mornings was where the district met. It was a good kind of social getting-together. Boys and girls kept looking around, working out which one they would like for a life’s mate, and generally it worked out quite well. So we had plenty of weddings, after which there were baptisms, and then another lot of weddings; and so on.’

‘The war interrupted all that for me. I had lived in our district all my life, with occasional trips to Adelaide and maybe a trip or two interstate for the young Methodists’ Christian Endeavour Convention. I always had my eye on Marie, but didn’t think I would marry early, so I never let on that I liked her. I would never have dreamed of telling her I loved her. To be honest, I wasn’t sure. I reckoned I would marry only when I matured. The whole idea of love was pretty vague to me.’

‘I remember that they put us new recruits into Woodside before they sent us across to New South Wales. I was never a drinker, so I didn’t have much occasion to go to the wet canteen. Some of my mates had enlisted, and most of them used to frequent the dry canteen. Later on some of them took to the beer, but on the whole we still kept our old friendships.’

‘It was in the hut that they talked about women. Most of it was a surprise to me. I wondered that they spent so much time on the subject. The conversation was generally about women, beer and sport, and maybe a little of politics. They picked you out after a time, that you didn’t care much for that line of talking, and some of them resented it. You just happened to be good at sport and so they left you alone because you could handle a football or a cricket bat. They reckoned you were man enough if you could do that, even if you didn’t womanise. Their main idea of being a man was mostly how good you were at womanising.’

HARRY seemed to go off into a bit of dreaming—a reverie of those raw days of Army recruits. I wondered whether, at this moment, he was seeing the old gums on the hill, with their dry, waving arms where the cockatoos and galahs had denuded them of leaves. Even as we talked they were taking swerving flights away from the high, dry branches, then returning with carking cries. It was the music that both Harry and I loved, even if the feathered beggars were a nuisance at harvest time.

When he came back from his dream Harry said, ‘I always knew that what they called sex was not what they thought it was. For them it was a bit of time with a woman and then—off! I knew it had to do with relationships. I had had a bit of kissing and cuddling, like most of the fellows, especially after the

country dances, but apart from a bit of stimulation I always knew it had to be better than that.'

He grinned at me. 'I kept myself a virgin up until the war, and then throughout the war. My mates were always curious about that—they wanted to know if it was true I was still a virgin. I never bothered to satisfy their curiosity. I had worked it out that since nearly all of them wanted to marry a virgin, they set some store by chastity. That was the contradiction they lived in.'

He grinned again. 'Young Larry, I don't remember many of the sermons I heard in our Methodist church. On the hot days I would near doze, and on the cold days I kept trying to keep my blood circulating, so never paid much attention. We had lay preachers mostly, and they were fiery enough. I think nearly every one of them wanted to be a John Wesley, but they never quite made it. Still, they were good. I really liked what I heard.'

'One day we had a visiting preacher from Adelaide, and he was pretty much up to modern thinking, but underneath he was just an old-fashioned Methodist. He preached on sex, and the whole congregation sat bolt upright. No one had ever preached on sex before, but what he said made a lot of sense. One of the things he said was, "Sex isn't just a physical thing. It is your whole life if you are married. It doesn't just belong to the bedroom."'

Harry chuckled as he began reliving that service and sermon.

'The old boy was letting us have it. All the men in those days wore black suits, white shirts and black ties, as though they were always going to a funeral on Sunday mornings, but underneath they were just farmers and storekeepers and the like. They didn't like anyone talking about sex. They reckoned that if what was preached didn't come directly from the Bible, then it was unacceptable.'

'Now the strange thing was that it all came from the Bible. Our visiting preacher started in the first chapter of Genesis and went to the last book in the Bible. All the time he talked about men and women and their relationships. When he finished, some of the women knew the roast in their ovens was burnt to a cinder. Even though it was late, people stayed around outside after the service, and they talked about the preacher. He didn't wait around,

and I bet he knew he had started a lot of controversy. He was on his way to the next district where he was to preach at the mid-afternoon service. I suppose he ate his sandwiches on the way.

'Some of the men were hostile, but the rest thought it was the best sermon they had had in years, and the most practical. As usual, men gathered in one group and the women in another, but you could hear the chatter of both groups. Much of what they were saying didn't reach me, but I kept thinking of a couple of things he had said. One was, "Chastity is power—power for a good marriage," and another, "If you try to get before marriage what you can only get in marriage, you get it neither before marriage, nor then in marriage."'

He looked at me, and I knew he had delivered the message I needed, and the one he wanted to give. I wasn't sure what it all meant, but it sounded right.

'So,' Harry continued, 'I used to listen to the fellows in the Army and kept in my mind what the preacher had said. I was going to keep to being a virgin. I was thinking about a good marriage, and rearing a good family.'

I knew the old boy was thinking about Marie and his own children scattered in different States, and the grandchildren that he rarely saw. Whatever he was thinking about Marie was pretty deep, because I saw his eyes mist, and he began a bit of covering coughing. When he began again, he told me the story about his closest friend, Tony.

'Tony was from Adelaide,' he said, 'and we became mates at Woodside Army Camp, and went through recruit-training together. Tony was good at Morse Code, having been an operator in the PMG. Like me, he was good at athletics and sport, and so we had a fair bit in common. I wouldn't have called him religious, but, like myself, he was a person of faith. Not that we liked the Sunday Service Parades much, but we had a friend or two among the padres, and sometimes we would attend their small group meetings.'

'Tony was a virgin, like me. Not that we ever talked about it. I guess we scarcely thought about it. In NSW, when the men had times of leave, we visited distant relatives, or folk known to our own families. When we returned, the men would boast—some of

them, anyway—about their magnificent sexual exploits, and Tony and I would exchange humorous glances and say nothing. Because those who told their yarns of sexual prowess knew we didn't show much interest, they seemed to get mad at us. Occasionally we were treated to a deliberate session of blue jokes, but we would lie back on our palliasses and read. After a time they gave up trying, and, anyway, we all were merging into a reasonable mateship, especially as we were getting near to embarkation.

'Our ship—the *Queen Mary*—took us to Singapore. Tony and I would go up onto the top deck to escape the heat where our beds were, down on "G" Deck. We would talk about things back in Aussie, and already we were getting nostalgic. Tony used to write pretty passionate letters to his girlfriend Teresa, and I thought idly about dropping a line to Marie. I never did, but then I never had a letter from her, so that squared things.

'We never knew we were bound for Malaya, even though we had been issued with tropical kits when we went on board. We arrived in Singapore and were sent north immediately. Tony and I were in a Section which was detached to Brigade Headquarters, and so we made our way by rail to Port Dickson.'

I saw old Harry's eyes dim for a moment as he went into another reverie.

When he came out of it he said, 'The Malay women are very beautiful, but they are Moslems and guarded heavily by their menfolk. No one ever got near them. It was different with the Chinese. In their own way the women are no less beautiful—being gentle, slender, and very gracious. I know Tony felt a bit of a tug towards them, but there was Teresa back in Adelaide, and their constant letter-writing. No; Tony remained faithful.

'Many of the men—married and single—found sex-mates and thought they were doing things well. I never even had an invitation to some of the high parties they attended, but we did have a dry canteen run by the local women, and they were very good to us. So our social life didn't suffer, and we had plenty of reading matter. Also we were always on exercises, on bivouacs, and sometimes we had to run in new motorcycles over hundreds of miles of good roads.

'I knew in my heart that Tony was getting restless. So one day I told him about the Methodist preacher who had startled us country fellows. We both laughed a good deal, as I reckon I told a good story. I also recited some of the statements that had stuck in my mind.

'After we finished talking, Tony went for a walk. When he came back he was very quiet. He pulled up my mosquito net and sat on the edge of the bed, covering us both from the malarial insects.

' "You know, Harry," he said, "I'm glad you told me about that business of maintaining chastity. I have been feeling like breaking it lately. These Chinese girls are very feminine, very dainty, and I am told they are quite passionate."

'We never talked about that again. Not long after, we went to Mersing to set up fortifications against the coming enemy, whom we knew to be the Japanese. We were billeted in tents on the forefront, looking out to the Indian Ocean. Mersing was beautiful, with no less the same kind of Chinese women we saw in the markets and the kampongs.

'Tony's billet was in the tent next to mine. We were both in a mobile wireless unit, and would move out together into the plantations and jungle areas and communicate with our limited equipment to Brigade HQ or the three infantry battalions and the one artillery regiment. Often, when we had mandatory wireless silence-time, we would talk about many things, but never once did Tony talk about women. For that matter, he rarely talked about Teresa, although he kept writing.

'Then it happened. I think it was one of the strangest and saddest things that I have known in my life. It was well after "Lights Out" that Tony came in. I heard him stumbling over tent pegs and other equipment. He was weeping—perhaps a bit blind from the tears, although it was a night of sheer moonlight. When I looked out of my tent, I saw him sitting on a camp stool, his head down between his knees, and sobbing. I guess he was trying to get over his bout before he went into his tent and his sleeping tent-mate.'

Harry Treglown looked at me. 'I know that folk would think my story crazy. They would say Tony was an unbelievable fool for weeping for lost chastity. That would be one of the most

hilarious stories a comedian could tell today, but then the comedian wouldn't understand what the Methodist lay preacher was on about that day.'

We both sat back and watched the whirling of the yellow-crested and the galahs, and they were like a white and pink cloud above the sturdy forest of ancient eucalypts. I kept thinking about Tony and his weeping. Curiously enough, it did not sound strange to me. I guessed there would be others, too, to whom it would not be strange.

'He sobbed just about all night,' said Harry. 'In the morning he was white under his tropical tan and his eyes were strained. We went out on mobile circuit and I drove the truck. He never said a word to me about the matter. I knew he would be hopeless on the Morse key, and I took over. He wandered out into the rubber plantation along the rows of trees whose cups were filling with latex. His head was down, and he kicked at anything which came his way. At lunchtime we heated up tinned rations with a blowlamp and ate them with Army bread, and still he was silent.

'He stayed in at nights and mooched about the camp. I don't think he wrote to Teresa, but I can't be sure about that. After a week or so he went back to the village, and I knew his immediate sorrow was over. We never spoke about the event, not even until his death on the Burma-Thailand Railway, and whatever had happened Tony kept it to himself; but I've never forgotten that night, and guess I never will.'

I AM writing this story decades after it was told to me. To write it down is itself a strange experience. I can imagine a modern reader roaring with laughter. These days sex is a 'fun thing'. The sex revolution has taken place and all are liberated from old Puritanical ideas about it. There is a new freedom everywhere. Marriages are leasehold, and in many cases not even wanted.

*De facto* relationships are considered to be both mature and maturing. We developed into a permissive society in the seventies and the eighties. Now we have no permissive society. Anything goes!

I guess the old Methodist lay preacher would be the laughing stock and the butt of most modern humorists. Much of the church

has moved into the new liberation. Even clergy divorce and marry again and find no impediment to their ministry. Harry Treglown's morality is ancient and rusty. Even so, I am glad I went to the older man when I was fourteen years of age. He taught me by Tony's experience, but he taught me even more. I have discovered there are two kinds of love—one selfish, called *eros*, and another unselfish, called *agape*. I've had my share of both, and I know the first one never lasts. The latter is the best, and only those who know it can fully understand Tony's weeping. They are the people who do not laugh at the young man: they are those who come freshly, and with power, to marriage.

I think their children get dividends from the past of their parents. Others have to learn to live with less than the best. But of course there is a way of recovery. Grace is always there to bring recovery. Just the memory of old Harry and his Marie and their children is something that comes back to me time and again. Then there is my own marriage and our children—but then that is another story. I mean, another good story.

## CONQUERING LOVE

I CAN vouch for the all details of the story that I tell about Harold Cross, except the name, which I have to change, of course. Oh yes, and there was the language. It was pretty rough, and I have substituted words which will not be offensive to more gentle readers. I know it takes a bit of the colour out of the story, but then it is colourful enough without the oaths and other adjectives. The event I am about to describe happened quite some years ago, although it is as vivid in my memory as the day it happened.

As soon as the caller on the phone began to speak, I knew he was a bit of an eccentric. There are men and women I have known in life—in the Army, in civvy street, and those I meet in my profession as a teacher and a counsellor—and these particular ones have a certain note in the tone of their voices and the way they phrase their conversation. I won't even try to explain it, but you don't have to have a psychic bent to work them out.

'It's Harry,' the voice said, 'Harry Cross. I'm ringing you because someone said you were real beaut in understanding people and getting them fixed up.'

I listened in silence. I knew Harold was a capable talker. I was right. He went on.

'Now look here, I've been a real so-and-so in my time. I beat up my first wife pretty badly and she divorced me. Then I got converted. I'm a changed man—born again, a new creation. I'm all of that. I go to church regularly and I love my wife a lot. We've been married over a year, about the same time that I have been born again, and now I am beating her up.'

There was a pause at the end of the line, and a few choking sounds were happening. He cleared his voice and was away again.

'Pastor,' he said, 'I'm real desperate. I hate beating her up. She's beautiful. Can you help me?'

I thought the case might be a bit difficult. 'I'll try,' I said, 'but no promises about success.'

'You can only do your best,' Harold told me. I knew then that he was a man of clichés, but thought no less of him for that. Clichés help us to talk, and they have their own value.

When I talked about an appointment he almost shouted me down.

'Pastor,' he shouted, 'I'm desperate. I need to see you right away. Can't you see me now?' He didn't wait for a reply, 'You must,' he said. 'I could come right now.'

This was no new thing. It is called 'crisis counselling'. I have learned not to groan about interruptions to a planned day. I think, now, that I see it as part of everything; so I agreed.

HE ARRIVED in an FJ Holden. It was old but shiny and well kept. It roared into our drive, and I met him at the door. In my study I have my father's Dental Notice, the plaque he used to have outside of his dental surgery. I guess I have always been proud he was a dentist. Harry was flabbergasted by it.

'Go on!' he breathed. 'You're a dentist too!' He looked at me with admiration and fear mingled.

I grinned and told him to take a chair. He sat, and I explained that it was my father's dental plate. That always causes a smile when people get the pun, but anyway he was relieved.

'About Jenny,' he said; 'why do I keep wanting to belt her up? Why can't I stop myself?'

'Let's try to find out,' I suggested.

He was a nervy man and restless, not finding the chair comfortable. 'It's my parents,' he said, before I could try. 'My old man was a regular bastard. Always hard on me. Always at me. He would belt me up, just like I'm belting up Jenny.'

'Were you a bit of terror yourself?' I asked, and he had the grace to grin.

'I guess you could say that,' he admitted. 'At the same time, there was no call for my old man to treat me the way he did.'

'And your Mum?' I asked.

'She was a real hard woman,' he said. 'Never let me have any freedom. No sooner than I got home from school than she was

into me about homework, about keeping my room tidy, about doing some work in the garden. A feller had no time for himself.'

'And what about you?' I asked. 'What kind of a life have you lived?'

I don't always go about things like that—asking intimate personal questions—but I knew he was pretty tough and would want it that way. In fact, 'tough' was the word he used.

'I was a tough little beggar,' he said, 'and a bit of a fighter. Ever since I can remember I've been fighting people. I even fought my old man and knocked him out once. Of course, I was a bigger feller then.'

Harold wasn't a big man, but certainly was as hard as nails, even at forty years of age. He went on. 'I started fighting in kindergarten. Then—you name it—I was always fighting. Even now, as a born-again person, I find it hard not to fight people.'

'What about the church elders?' I said. 'Do you ever want to fight them?'

He stared at me. 'No, I'd never do that,' he said, in a highly moral voice, and with a bit of a grin. 'No, I never do that in the church. It's not proper. Mind you, I argue with them when I think they are wrong on a bit of doctrine.'

I tried not to grin, thinking about Harry's twelve months of doctrinal learning. 'Did you ever fight policemen?' I asked.

He looked at me sideways to detect whether or not I was serious. 'I was never any man's fool,' he said. 'I always knew where to stop.'

I found that interesting, but he was away again. 'Of course,' he said, 'my fighting landed me in a lot of trouble. Not only the fighting either. I might as well tell you I have been in most of the reform and remand places, and of course in gaol. Many times. Yet I really wasn't what you call a real crim. I generally knew where to stop.'

I was beginning to like Harry, and to be entertained, but then I knew that wasn't the name of our game; I mean, 'entertainment'. I now knew Harry had been a rebel from his birth, and that he didn't like authority. There was nothing brilliant in that deduction.

'Have you ever obeyed anybody?' I asked.

He was silent about that, and thoughtful. He had a puzzled

look in his eyes. When he spoke it was as one mystified. 'Come to think of it,' he said, 'no. No, I have never obeyed anybody—not even my old man—and I still resent the pastor when he puts me on the spot.' Then an idea struck him. 'You know, I was in the Army for nine years, so I guess I must have obeyed some of them. You can't get away all the time with disobedience in the Army.'

It was my turn to grin. 'I was six years in the Army,' I told him. 'All you had to do was toe the line. You could get away with that.'

His admiration knew no bounds. 'Yes, of course,' he agreed. 'You didn't have to obey. You just toed the line.' He liked that, and thought about it for some moments. 'I guess I've always been clever enough to know when I should toe the line and when I want to throw over the traces so I can be free.'

EVEN before we had begun the conversation, I had taken Harry for a rebel, a tough, fully conditioned rebel. The question was whether he could change from a rebel to a sane human being within the hour or two of our conversation that morning.

'Tell me about your former wife,' I asked, and a storm came on his face.

'Rotten little bitch, that Mary!' he said. 'Clearing out with that guy. As for him—I could murder *him*.' He clenched his fists and made a few fighting motions. 'He was a real sneak,' he said contemptuously.

After a time we had exhausted Harry's surface hates, and I asked him how he had come to be converted.

The storms abated and his face was clear—clear as the country after rain. Something resembling a seraphic smile floated on to his face. His eyes almost glowed.

'She's a stunner,' he said, 'a real ripper. Real sweet she is.' He stopped and looked troubled. 'Why did I beat her up?' he asked despairingly. He stared at me as though longing for the answer.

'She led me to Jesus,' he said, and his eyes were moist. His hands went limp on his lap. 'Come on, padre,' he said, 'help me to stop belting her up. She don't deserve one slap of it all.'

I knew he expected me to work the miracle, and whilst I have

seen many such miracles happen, I have no way of making them happen. Not, anyway, from myself. It is just that I have never thought of a human being as a psychological creature. I have always reckoned that each human being is a mystery, unable to be captured into psychological categories. No matter how evil a person appears to be, he is a spiritual creature, and by 'spiritual' I do not mean 'religious'.

'YOU have a problem,' I said, trying to look wise but not stern.

'Have I now?' he said, and looked a bit breathless. He kept staring at me.

'Yes,' I said briefly. 'Your problem is that you have never let anyone love you.'

I expected something to happen, but nothing like what did happen. He uttered a shrill cry that seemed little less than demonic. Then it seemed that he was propelled by some unseen force. He heaved into the air, and landed across the room—catapulted, as it were, into another chair. There he sat, stunned.

'Never let anyone love me?' he whispered. He looked up at me. 'You are right!' he shouted. 'You are so right, man! That's it! I have never let anyone love me. I get angry with Jenny when she comes the soft-soap love thing. Then I beat her up. It was the same with Mary. Come to think of it, it has always been the same with everyone.'

He looked at me, puzzled. 'The social workers tried hard to get me to a sensible state, but I fought them like fury. Some of the fellers in the Military Police used to talk to me, to try and help me, and I told them where they got off!' He paused and shook his head. He was puzzled, and kept staring up at me. Then he asked me the hard question, 'How do I get out of this? How do I change?'

I kept the sense of triumph to myself. I knew instinctively that Harry was going to change. He stood up and went back to the first chair he had sat in. It seemed proper to be there. He sat, waiting. All the talk had leaked out of him.

WHAT I said to him is what I have said to innumerable people over the years. It was just about love—the love of the Father.

People generally wince when you talk about God as Father. Harry didn't even wince. He was like any wild horse I have seen, that has just been broken in. It trembles, is thoughtful. It wonders why suddenly it is broken, yet is somehow the better for it—as though that was the destiny always coming to it. Harry was like that. He was listening, and what I said to him he must have heard many times without it touching him right at the centre of his heart.

It was about how terrible is the guilt human beings carry about with them—an ever-increasing, ever-compounding load of guilt that makes most of life uneasy and drives people to do things that normally they may even hate. No way out of the predicament. I told Harry why his rages came, and the attempts to off-load his guilt onto others but coming out of those events in states that were worse.

He kept nodding as though he recognised the reality of it all. He made no attempt to justify himself. Someone was unfolding to him the life he had lived. You might say he was seeing some light at the end of his dreadful tunnel.

Then I talked about the Cross and the guilt-bearing of Christ, and how he had not been beaten up by God for Harry's sins, but he had taken Harry's guilt—and guilts—to himself and let them work themselves out on him until they were utterly played out, exhausted, and obliterated. I also told him that this was the Father's plan from before time, because He had always loved Harry. Harry's idiocy, sin and crime had not fazed the Father of love. He had kept on steadily loving him, unwaveringly giving up His own Son for Harry, and all the other Harrys and Jennys and Marys.

It was then he began to weep, and this without any self-consciousness. At first he refused the Kleenex tissues, and kept wiping away his tears with his hands. Then he took the tissues like some sacrament of penitence, and let the tears flow silently.

After a time there were no tears and Harry was back to his self—full of excitement. He kept pounding his thighs with his fists. 'Fantastic!' he was crying. 'Fantastic it is!'

He looked at me. 'You know what I mean, eh?—this love inside me!' He nearly wept for joy. 'It's so huge I think my chest is

going to burst.’ Then his fists would hammer on his thighs again. ‘It’s just plain fantastic.’

AFTER a time I said, ‘What about your Dad, Harry? What about him now? Do you forgive him?’

The tears threatened to come again. ‘He was a fine old feller,’ he said proudly. ‘Did all he could for me, but I was a disappointment to him.’

‘Do you forgive him?’ I asked.

The word ‘forgive’ seemed strange to him. ‘Not really anything to forgive,’ he said in a puzzled voice. ‘I used to think there was plenty to forgive, if ever I would have to come to that.’

‘And your Mum?’

‘Ah, she was a great woman. She did all she could. I was just a pain in the neck.’

‘What about your former wife: do you forgive her?’

He nodded. ‘I made her life a hell,’ he said. ‘No, she don’t need forgiveness. I needed it, but that’s come to me, so you tell me.’

‘What about the man who married her?’

He looked at me, rage returning to his eyes. Then he looked shocked. ‘Oh!’ he cried. ‘It’s going! It’s going!’

‘What’s going?’ I asked.

‘This wonderful joy, this great love in my heart, in my chest.’ There was a tinge of horror in his eyes. ‘I’d better forgive him, hadn’t I? I’d better, or I’ll lose this great thing.’

I HAVE never forgotten that interview—or whatever you wish to call it. I will always remember the joy that returned to his face and his eyes when he forgave his former rival whom he had hated so deeply. Nor can I forget the almost seraphic peace that was on his face when he was about to return to his wife to tell her what had happened, and what a different life it had come to be.

We both felt immense relief and joy when we shook hands. I gave him a few small books which would help to reinforce what I had said, but the miracle had happened. I watched him get into his shiny, well-kept FJ Holden, and the tyres scabbled on the yellow gravel as he burst off into the summer day. His goal was his beloved Jenny and their new life.

My tireless analytical mind was explaining what had happened. ‘What was once *eros* has now become *agape*,’ I told myself theologically. Then I forgot all that in face of the mystery of the Father’s love.

I looked up at my father’s Dental Notice—all resplendent as a brass plate with black lettering, and shining as brightly as the day it had been made. Then, of course, I was thinking about the Father’s love and the love of the Son which could dispel a jangled, tangled past and make a bright new present.

A FEW years later Harold visited me. He sat in the chair and looked around, as though remembering the day when it had all happened.

He was a quiet man now, and looked wise. He told me he was an elder in his church, and I gather he was a trusted leader.

‘Sometimes it isn’t perfect,’ he told me. ‘Sometimes I am tempted to go back to the anger and the rebellion, but then somehow I recover. There are times when I have to apologise, but on the whole it is a different life.’ We chatted, had a cup of tea and some cookies.

I noticed the old FJ had been replaced by a newer car. ‘Jenny likes this one better,’ he said, and I didn’t hear any regret in his voice. He thanked me warmly, shaking hands strongly, and then he was off.

## GOD IS ALL-LOVING

God is all-loving, He is our Father,  
He who loves all men, He who loves you,  
He who demands that we should love all men,  
Who loves this Father, must love them too.

Who loves the Father should love his brother,  
Who loves the Father must love His son,  
And so we love them—call them all brothers—  
Love them through Father—great God of love!

There on Christ's Calv'ry He bore our sorrows,  
Our hurts and hatreds were on Him laid,  
There all the anger, sore wounds and anguish  
Were cleansed by suffering, each debt was paid.

Gone is the anger, gone the resentment,  
Gone is the hatred, gone is the pain.  
Come is the wonder of a new spirit  
As love comes coursing through every vein.

We are forgiven: His love has reached us,  
We are forgiven, so we forgive.  
Love we as brothers, love we as sisters,  
Love we as family—for this we live.

Praise to the Father, who gives us sonship,  
Praise to the Spirit, who keeps us free,  
Praise to the Saviour, who makes us brethren,  
Praise be for ever—for Family!

## THE MEEK MAN OF LOVE

THEY saw him—his people—a man of one hundred and twenty years, whose 'eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated'. They listened to him as a great song rolled forth from him—an elegy of beauty, a sung poem of stern and brilliant revelation of the mighty God he had worshipped and served. The words of that song have come down through history with clarity, loveliness and powerful exhortation:

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;  
and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.  
May my teaching drop as the rain,  
my speech distil as the dew,  
as the gentle rain upon the tender grass,  
and as the showers upon the herb.  
For I will proclaim the name of the Lord.  
Ascribe greatness to our God!

'Ascribe greatness to our God!' This man spoke of the love of the Lord for His people, in taking an itinerant—almost vagrant—clan, shepherding them towards a land of their own, and a destiny that even yet has to be fulfilled:

He found him in a desert land,  
and in the howling waste of the wilderness;  
he encircled him, he cared for him,  
he kept him as the apple of his eye.  
Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,  
that flutters over its young,  
spreading out its wings, catching them,  
bearing them on its pinions,  
the Lord alone did lead him,  
and there was no foreign God with him.  
He made him ride on the high places of the earth,

and he ate the produce of the field;  
 and he made him suck honey out of the rock,  
 and oil out of the flinty rock.  
 Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock,  
 with fat of lambs and rams,  
 herds of Bashan and goats,  
 with the finest of the wheat—  
 and of the blood of the grape you drank wine.

The most outstanding thing about this man was his exposition of true love. He was the first in history to expound, if not to demonstrate, the kind of love which most affects the human race. In his day D. H. Lawrence was supposed to have brought a revelation of what human love—the love between a man and woman—could be in all its glory. However, I am not speaking about such professional troubadours—of whom there have been many in history—but of an historic person who was called ‘a man of great humility, the most humble man on earth’. Nor am I speaking of the man-woman love which is today known as *eros*, but of a love that encompasses God and all humanity. Somehow in the depths of his humility this man had a revelation of love which outclasses even the greatest of the love-singers and the love-writers the world has known. This person was the true troubadour of God’s love.

HISTORY well knows of this man who was called ‘Moses’, ‘son of the water’. The daughter of the reigning Pharaoh found the baby floating in a waterproof crib on the waters of the great Nile. This baby of the river was later described as ‘beautiful’, ‘a fine child’, ‘a proper child’ and ‘no ordinary child’, because there was something distinctive about him, even at birth. Reared for forty years in the palace of the daughter of the king, the growing man learned the lore and law of the land and gained the nobility of a prince. His heart lay with his people, and he had indignation when he saw them treated as slaves, and in a rage he killed an Egyptian he saw ill-treating one of his own nation.

There was little humility in this rash and senseless act, and because of it he had to flee into the desert. He was a marked man—a murderer. How does a killer become the great apostle of love?

For Moses it first meant living forty years as a fugitive from justice, learning the ways of a simple shepherd, and marrying into a people called the Midianites, who were descendants of Abraham from his second wife Keturah, so that in a distant way Moses was amongst people of his own blood. Moses married into this shepherd family, to a woman whose name was Zipporah and a person who could be most fierce in love.

After forty years an event occurred which was to set his understanding of the Lord for the rest of his life. Moses had an experience of what the theologians call a ‘theophany’, that is, a physical manifestation of the invisible God. The Lord appeared to him in a bush which burned but was not at all consumed by the flames. It was borne in on him that the place where he was standing with curiosity in his mind was in reality a holy place. He was in the Presence of God. From that point onwards he became ‘a man of the Presence’. Just as ‘the God of glory appeared unto Abraham’, so did He appear to Moses, and Moses was given the first indications of the God of *ahabah* (Hebrew), that is, the God of *agape* (Greek), Divine love. God revealed to Moses His love for His own people—the children of the patriarch Jacob, that is, ‘Israel’, as he later came to be called.

The revelation was that God would deliver His people who groaned under the tyranny of the Pharaoh. He would not only release them from the despotic Egyptian rule, but He would take them to the land of Canaan, the region He had promised the first great patriarch, Abraham. Moses was to be the man who would lead God’s people out of Egypt into Palestine. The Books of Exodus and Numbers tell of the signs and wonders God carried out against the Egyptians, and the strange journey which followed, when God ‘found him [Israel] in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness’ and ‘encircled him . . . cared for him’ and ‘kept him as the apple of his eye’.

We cannot comprehend the greatness of Moses unless we understand what an enormous task it was to take a whole nation of people on the journey around the Sinai Desert for forty years. Estimates of the number of the people range from half a million to a million and a half. It was an incredible task to shape a slave-people into a true nation, to help feed, clothe and govern them for

that long period. Even the habitual enemies of Israel acknowledge this was one of the most amazing events in history. What was most remarkable was the wisdom, the temper and the love of this man who combined the prophetic, the royal, the priestly and legal functions that are essential to the good being of a nation. Few, if any other leaders of history, have combined these four functions to shape their nations. Only a revelation of God's nature to this man enabled this prophetic, priestly prince to attain to greatness and to achieve the wisdom of love. To compass the growth and development of this Israelite leader would take many volumes. Looking at just a few incidents will help us to see he discovered and declared the great *ahabah*, the dynamic *agape* of the Lord God Himself, the God Who in the New Testament writings is not simply declared to be loving but very love Himself.

IN ONE way Moses was established by his knowledge of God. In another way he had to contend with the Lord he had come to know. So intimate was he with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that God said of him—in contrast to other prophets with whom He communicated by dreams and visions—‘my servant Moses is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord.’ These were high words indeed. No less beautiful is the statement, ‘Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, *as a man speaks to his friend*.’ The only other man to be called ‘the friend of God’ was Moses’ forefather, the great Abraham.

Some would say that Saul of Tarsus, when converted to Paul the incessant missionary to the nations, was the second great apostle of love. Certainly his rich chapter of I Corinthians 13 has become the classic statement of love for the last two thousand years. In that passage Paul said, amongst other things, ‘Love is not provoked.’ Whilst it may not be said of Moses that he was never provoked, it can be said that many things happened which sorely tried his love for his people. Some of these were:

(a) The rejection by his people in Egypt at the time of their slavery. He was asked, ‘Who made you a prince and a judge

over us?’ Forty years later, Moses was reluctant to become their leader and the saviour of them from Egypt.

(b) During the times of the signs and wonders God was doing against Egypt through Moses and Pharaoh, the people complained, ‘The Lord look upon you and judge, because you have made us offensive in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.’ Later in this time it was said, ‘Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel; but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel bondage.’ How often Moses must have wished he were back in the desert with his Midianite family!

(c) When the army of Egypt was pursuing the Israelites to the Red Sea, the people said to Moses, ‘Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt? . . . For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.’

(d) Murmuring against Moses in the wilderness happened often. It happened on at least two occasions when they lacked water and cried, ‘What shall we drink?’ It happened when they cried for food, after which God gave the people quails, and then daily manna from heaven. A further occasion was described:

*Now the rabble that was again among them had a strong craving; and the people of Israel also wept again, and said, ‘O that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.’*

(e) Essentially the greatest provocation was when the people made a molten calf and worshipped it whilst Moses was in the mountain with God. It seemed that all his work was undone.

(f) Another provocative situation was when Moses’ brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, turned against him and criticised him, saying he was no more a prophet than they. This was because he had married a Cushite woman. That they were terribly wrong in what they did was shown by the punishment God brought on Aaron and Miriam.

(g) There were the events of Nadab and Abihu offering ‘unholy fire before the Lord’, and of the rebellion of Korah,

Dathan, Abiram and On, who conspired against Moses to unseat him as leader. On both occasions the offenders were punished, but the happenings were most painful to Moses.

(h) One of the most terrible occasions was that of the people refusing to go into the land of Canaan in spite of the assurance of Caleb and Joshua that the people could take the land, although the report of the other ten spies was that they could not. The outcome of that event was as follows:

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry; and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why does the Lord bring us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?' And they said to one another, 'Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.'

Each of these major provocations must be seen in its true light. I believe it would take us many months of steady reading, getting back into the text of the first five books of Moses (known as the Pentateuch), in order to understand the extraordinary man of whom we speak. His three periods of forty years each were developmental periods. Only at the end could he sing his now-famous song, and his now-understood prophetic poem of blessing, since it had taken a lifetime of that training to bring his life to such a rich climax. At the time of his life, hundreds of years stood between him and Abraham, and even between him and the noteworthy prince Joseph, whose bones he disinterred in order to bury them in the new Israel, as a memorial of his people's greatness.

What now occupies us is trying to get into the mind of the meekest or most afflicted of all men on the earth, in order to understand his love for his people, and to see the nature of that love. In order to do that we must read at least two commentaries on him, one from the Old Testament, and one from the New Testament. The Old Testament one is,

And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to

all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

The New Testament one is,

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them.

If we had had to face the afflictions and provocations this man had to endure, and if we had had some of the weaknesses which were his, and had we murdered a man in savage patriotism, then how could we have emerged as persons of love? His actions were almost always misunderstood, his people lived on another level of faith and ambition, and even his own brother and sister could not fully understand the powerful call he had received from God.

The secret of his love was that he had seen God. God had appeared to him in theophanies—sightful manifestations of Himself—and for a person to have one of these would be life-transforming. To constantly converse with God would be to understand the great truth the Apostle John later proclaimed, 'God is love.' When that is known, then all is known. To be the friend of God might not put a man on par with God, but it would let him know the mind and character of the One Whom he constantly beheld.

Love's first test came at the time of Israel's first apostasy—its devising of a molten idol in the form of a calf, which was the normal representation of the heathen Baal. It was Moses' own brother Aaron who helped the people fashion their god. They wanted something of sight, something substantial whilst Moses was all too long on the mountain with God, and it was Aaron who showed them the shape and cried, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'

In the mountain God told Moses what had happened, and said, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation.'

In answer Moses said, ‘O Lord, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, “With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth”? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.”’

The response to Moses’ strong intercession was, ‘And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.’

Even so, there was the matter of discipline for those who had committed apostasy. When Moses came to the camp he saw ‘that the people had broken loose’—that is, ‘out of control’ and ‘lapsing into idolatry’—‘for Aaron had let them break loose, to their shame among their enemies’. Then Moses confronted them, crying, ‘Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.’ There was then slaughter of those who confirmed their own idolatry.

In the sight of the people Moses addressed Israel in rebuke: ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord [on Sinai]; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’ All Israel knew that atonement was a costly sacrifice, and so Moses addressed God as one prepared to pay the most terrible price—whatever it might be. Addressing God, he interceded for the people he loved: ‘Alas, this people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’

God’s answer to this high offer was, ‘Whoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. But now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.’

ONE would think that after such a happening, Moses could have easily endured the sniping, carping criticisms that came to him on

various occasions. For the most part this is what he did, because he knew of the God who loved his people. As he came to the end of his life with Israel, he delivered to them the addresses which we call ‘The Book of Deuteronomy’. Rarely in the history of man have such great addresses and such deep teaching been given. In the pages of this superb book we read of God’s unconditional love to His people, and then His call for their love as a response to His. Indeed, He promises the nation that He will enable them to give to Him the love that He demands. These things we shall see shortly, but first we need to see the revelation of God’s glory which enabled Moses to take the people to the borders of the Promised Land.

Following the event of Israel’s apostasy, Moses told the Lord he could not take the people up to the new land out of his own resources. He pleaded with God, ‘Now therefore, I pray thee if I have found favour in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee and find favour in thy sight.’ He asked to see the full glory of God, but this the Lord would not do. He said He would show him just enough of His glory to fulfil his needs in leading the people.

So then, there on the mountain, where the law was given, ‘the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”’

So powerful was the unveiling of God’s moral glory that ‘Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshipped.’ He now knew that with such a revelation of the nature of God that Divine grace and mercy would prevail, no matter how obstinate and stubborn and terrible his people might prove to be.

One of the occasions of their complaining was because of the lack of water. At Marah the water was bitter and undrinkable, but Moses was able to turn it to sweetness—an actual but parabolic

action which ought to have encouraged the children of Israel permanently. Even so, they complained a second time at a place near Sinai which the Lord called Massah and Meribah, meaning, 'Proof' and 'Contention', because they had presumed to test the Lord there. God had told Moses to strike the rock at Horeb, and this Moses had done, and the water had flowed.

However, it was the third occasion when the people complained that Moses was finally provoked. This happened at Kadesh-barnea, which, in the Book of Ezekiel, is called Meribath-kadesh, thus leading us to believe it was at the same place where the rock was originally struck. Some critical writers think it can only be the original event recorded in Exodus re-written, edited and embellished, but there is no proof that that was the case. This seems distinctively to be another happening. The complaint of the people is found in the Book of Numbers:

Now there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people contended [disputed, challenged] with Moses, and said, 'Would that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink.'

God was certainly in this event with Moses and Aaron, from the presence of the people to the presence of God at the tent of meeting, where 'the glory of the Lord appeared to them'. This was the glory God had revealed formerly to Moses—the glory that was to enable him to 'carry the people'. Now God was giving the two brothers explicit instructions to help the people to get water: 'Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle.'

God was about to enact His love to His people, albeit they were contentious and ought to have learned of His provision for water from the previous occasion. That act was never to be seen as love, for Moses said to the people, 'Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses,

instead of speaking to the rock, lifted up the rod and struck it twice. In this act he had defamed the God, the Lord and King of Israel. Sure enough, the water flowed forth from the rock, and so much so, that both the people and the flocks of sheep and mobs of cattle were able to drink.

Later Paul was to say, 'Love is not provoked,' but Moses was provoked. He was asked to *speak* to the rock, not *smite* it. The rock *once smitten* was now to be the vehicle of the quenching of thirst when simply *spoken to*. Later Paul was to say that the Rock that followed Israel in the wilderness was Christ, and that Israel had drunk of that Rock. Christ the Rock was smitten for men and women at the Cross, and from that Cross flowed the rivers of the water of life. To attempt to smite it again—'to crucify the Son of God afresh'—would be unforgivable.

Moses had failed in love! He of all people: he who knew God so well, and knew Him as love, now had denigrated God in the eyes of the people. So God spoke to him and to Aaron: 'Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.' If our human sympathy with Moses seems to consider the sentence a stiff one, then we should note that later, in the same chapter, their act is twice called 'rebellion against my command', and in Deuteronomy Moses twice tells the congregation, 'The Lord was angry with me on your account,' whilst the Psalmist later recorded,

They angered him at the waters of Meribah,  
and it went ill with Moses on their account;  
for they made his spirit bitter,  
and he spoke words that were rash.

What then was the sin of Moses? It was said, 'You did not believe in me. You failed to sanctify me in the eyes of the people.' Moses, with Aaron, had rebelled against the unreasonableness of the people, yet their sin was not as the great apostasy. On a lesser ground Moses had lost his temper. Most of all he had failed to operate in love. Just as—later—the church at Ephesus had to repent because it had abandoned its first love, so had Moses to realise he had done a terrible thing. If he had obeyed

God he would have spoken to the rock and the people would have seen the love and grace of the Lord—the love and grace that He had promised to Moses would always be with His people. Now, because of the incident at Kadesh-barnea, they could not be sure. Moses in every way had been God's *representative*, but he took over God's *prerogative*. He had been as God to the people, and so had misrepresented Him as being an angry Deity.

Peter said of Christ, 'When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.' Paul told the Christians at Rome, 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.' Previously he had pointed out that when we were sinners God showed His love by Christ dying for such sinners. The highest test love can have is provocation, and the more the provocation, the greater the revelation of love, for 'Love is not provoked'.

IT SEEMS sad that Moses should have been forbidden entrance into the new covenant-land, but Moses himself had accepted this fact, otherwise he would not have twice reminded the people, in his last days, of his misdemeanour. At the last we do not find the man of one hundred and twenty years to be other than vital and a person of love. When we read Deuteronomy we receive a brilliant presentation of love.

In Deuteronomy, in his great addresses, Moses first reminds his people of the love of God, 'Because he loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them, and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power . . . to bring you in . . . know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.' Again, 'It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers . . . know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him . . . he will love you, bless you, and multiply you.'

As God has loved Israel, so He demands Israel's love to Him as a reflexive thing: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your

heart, and with all your soul and with all your might.' His mercy is 'to thousands of those who love me', and God will test out that love by the false prophets: 'You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul'. The Lord's love should draw out their love, but in any case He will make sure they love Him: 'And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.'

OUR RICH conclusion is, then, that Moses was a man of love to the last. His ways of loving his people may not have been of the pure nature of *ahabah* or *agape* in the early times, but as he saw and understood the glory of God he came to understand the beautiful mystery of love. In a way his fall at Kadesh-barnea is also a help to us. It teaches us that refusal to love is rebellion and brings a bitter spirit and rash words, but even so, it does not cancel out the love God has given us. We can fail terribly—even to failing to sanctify God in the eyes of the people—but that does not mean our failure is final. His love rehabilitates us, and our love is fresh and pure again.

So much we learn from the meekest man upon all the earth, the one who failed in love, and was forbidden to lead his people. Years later he enters the land: he appears in glory with the prophet Elijah who is also—like Christ—transfigured by the glory. The Moses of Mount Sinai is the Moses on Mount Tabor, and shares with 'the Son of His love' 'his exodus which he [Jesus] was to accomplish at Jerusalem'. He and Elijah discussed with the transformed Messiah the greatest of all acts of love—the action of Calvary. As a New Testament writer later said, 'He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward . . . he endured as seeing him who is invisible.'

If it takes one hundred and twenty years for so great a man to attain to love, then we are encouraged not to lose heart.

## LORD, YOU ARE MY LOVE

Lord, You are my love,  
You alone I love, and all my loves  
Are in the loving of You. Yet You  
Came first in Your love; in Your  
Mysterious predestining, fixing my life,  
Planning my destiny before the world began.

You are my love, and when I wake—  
Time and again in the many nights—  
There is sometimes the faint line of dread,  
Sometimes the inner terror of the Holy One,  
And I fear lest I have offended You.  
Then Your love comes—reassuring—  
And in Your word, and on my knees,  
And in the secret places  
Of my secret heart there is a tryst—  
A man and God affair  
Of love inexpressible. I weep  
And seem to hear You too,  
Not weeping as I, but with me, for me,  
And the pain becomes a precious pain,  
A rich suffering in joy,  
And I am one with You.

Oh, Triune Lover, persistent One  
Who never leaves me night and day  
But moves within my dreams, and lives within  
My daily awakenings, hear of my love.

More than faint intimations  
Are the visitations and the 'never-leavings'  
That I have known these years of all my life.  
Sometimes my thoughts of leaving You grow strong  
And with the thought bewilderment fast grows,  
And like the Psalmist in my heart I cry,  
'Whither, Lord, shall I go from Thy presence?  
Thou art not only the Eternal One,  
Being the Everywhere I'd go, but of Thee  
And from Thee, I am what You have made me.  
Separation intolerable  
My inner spirit dreads.  
Such loneliness apart from Thee  
Is more than Hell itself, yet Hell's substance  
That void the rebellious know.'

Why, in this night—this early morn—  
Do I speak to You, speak thus?  
Why does this moan escape my lips?  
Why does my heart complain  
When all You've ever shown  
Is holy love to me? Ah, yes,  
The rub lies there, the hurt, the pain,  
That You are holy, You are pure,  
And I am not. Strange truth and fact,  
That though You holy be and I am not,  
Your love enwraps my soul and spirit  
Like a protecting mantle, a healing cloak  
That cleanses as it loves, loves as it purifies,  
And makes me one with You,  
Your inner heart to mine and mine to You.  
This is the mystery—the pained alternation  
Of love and fear, of fear and love—  
The mystery that's my life  
From when conceived until this now  
And 'til the death that's life  
Releases me from pain and joy  
Of the present mingling.

The present mingling is the grace  
 And love that I and God are one.  
 This is the dread that comes to me—the commingling  
 Of human flesh and Your dread Deity  
 Catching me up to all eternity  
 In a resistless love. Why then  
 Do I moan in the deep night  
 At the painful delight of present union,  
 Future joy and ecstasy—not Dionysian but pure  
 As love makes serene forever?  
 Why should my heart complain  
 Except its shame should make me long  
 For the Then to be Now—the Then I dread  
 As now I dread, and yet adore?

Ah Lord! I love you deep,  
 Deeper than all my secret heart,  
 Deeper than Heaven and Hell themselves.  
 Your love once captured me  
 Even before I saw the Tree:  
 But all the time the Tree was there  
 With You, in You, for me, for them.  
 One word from You is spoken not  
 But in the Cross, and by the Cross,  
 And through the Cross, and from its self  
 Till Christ in all his love—  
 And Spirit-love along—  
 Ushers my trembling heart to you  
 Till all Your Fatherhood  
 Embraces me forever.

Dear Lord, there's no complaint,  
 Only the pliant gentle, the tender plea  
 That I may tell, with power You give,  
 The everlasting love—the mercy full—  
 That lifts to love's most holy height  
 And there retains forever  
 The transformed spirit. Lord, I plead,

Never release me from the noble call,  
 That dignity most high—that ministry  
 That makes the heart of me melt to be  
 One with Your love forever,  
 One, as I tell Your love in quivering tones  
 From depths that measure cannot know—  
 Your depthless, breadthless, heightless love,  
 That captures me forever,  
 And in its capture captures all  
 Its utter holiness had planned  
 For time and all eternity.

## LOVE'S WOUNDS NEVER FESTER

I CAN vouch for the truth of this story because it was told to me by a missionary who is a very close friend of mine. I will not report it in the third person, but in the first, as though it were he who was telling the yarn.

WE WERE missionaries for many years in what was then known as West Pakistan. We were feeling very strange when we arrived in Karachi, and were faced with a wholly foreign situation with our five children on hand. We all loved the new sights and sounds, if not fully the smells, but we had that uneasiness which comes from being in a different climate and culture. By a wonderful stroke of good fortune, my brother happened to be in the city. He was with an airways company of great note, and was there to arbitrate on some employees' dispute. Being my oldest brother, he was the most remote in the family to me, but, even so, was very warm and affectionate. I can remember him hustling us off to stores, and buying sheets and towels and pillow slips for us, things we had not brought from home, intending to buy them in the country of our adoption—a cotton-producing and cotton-milling land.

That night he put us on the express train for Murree, some 1,100 miles away, in the hills that are part of the Himalayas. He made sure we had boiled water in pottery *serais*, so that we would not catch dysentery and the terrible Karachi tummy. We were not to eat salad vegetables. He chatted on as the train became crowded. Fortunately we were in a second-class carriage with seats booked for sleeping. He told us all we needed to know, and then he and our missionary society secretary farewelled us as we drew out from Karachi Station. The children were hot and tired

and a bit insecure. So were we—my wife Ellen and myself. Soon we were travelling through the Sindh Desert, which cools down reasonably at night, and the desert wind brought a little relief.

The journey doesn't matter much now. It was the missionary community to which it brought us that is imprinted on our minds. Being some 5,000 feet up in the Himalayan hills brought some relief from the heat of the plains. We were put into the Vicarage of what had been the Church of England, and it was comfortable. We moved amongst Pakistani teachers who taught us the Urdu language, and fellow missionaries whose greatest problem seemed to be the shortage of toilet paper.

Our offspring settled into the school for the missionaries' children. We began to learn the language and to get to know our fellow missionaries. They were kind to us, showing us the ropes. Since we were not as young as most, we had the respect of most. The children in our own missionary society mingled and made friends amongst their peers. In a year or two, our society built very comfortable flats or apartments, and so many of us lived together during the hot months. We watched our children playing their games together, mostly in fun, but sometimes there was anger. Sometimes the rivalries mounted up to aggression and we wondered where we had failed our children—we who taught so much concerning love.

There were times when we were critical of one another, so high were our ethical and relational demands upon one another, but times of talking together, meetings of spiritual quality and the hours of worshipping—to say nothing of morning and afternoon teas and suppers together—brought mounting friendships. As far as the Toons, our neighbours and fellow missionaries, were concerned, we never seemed to have any problems. Joan Toon was a woman who had a sensitive social sense, and her morning and afternoon teas were a social delight. Her husband Arthur was a fresh and creative fellow. He seemed to me more like a born cricketer, someone always going on to, or coming off, the field in cream flannels. I guessed correctly that he had been to England, and thought that perhaps he had played in county cricket. He looked just the man for a green and gold cap, except that he happened to be a New Zealander.

There was a bit of mild rivalry between the Australian and New Zealand missionaries in our society, but when confronted with English or American missionaries we were really one. Not, mind you, that missionaries from different lands ganged up against one another, but we felt—albeit lightly—the cultural differences. Looking back on it all, it is faintly amusing, but at the time the differences were there. Of course, when it came to facing the Pakistani population—especially the large Muslim part of it—we were as one. Murree was a hill resort built by the British on precarious ridges of the hills, with a good commercial centre, touristy arts and crafts, and the special restaurants and cafés. It was all quite fascinating. ‘Sam’s’, the top-class restaurant opposite the Vicarage, was the place to eat. Its customs were a leftover vestige from the days of the British Raj—such as eating tiers of cakes and drinking tea poured from silver pots, and the like. A band always played pre-war jazz and was famous for its saxophones.

THE SINDH plain was the place where we worked, and the city in particular was Hyderabad. It was a fascinating place, with its ancient walls that encircled the original inner city, but long ago it had sprawled out onto the plains, and had its special areas of occupation, the main one of which was the Cantonment. Cantonments were built by the British at the edge of every large city, in order to effect control of the native population. Splendid bungalows housed the officers, lesser bungalows the lesser non-commissioned officers, and there were modest quarters for the other ranks. The pattern was simply repeated for the Pakistani Army personnel. The streets were wide, spreading trees kept the area reasonably cool, and somehow it always remained a cut above the city with its crowded shops and houses. At first we lived on a Mission compound in the city, but later graduated to the Cantonment, where we renovated a much neglected church of cathedral dimensions, getting rid of the pigeons and their years-old droppings, the rats that infested the pigeon manure, and the snakes that preyed on the rats. The church was turned into a Bible college, and a new home was built for us.

We cycled between city and Cantonment, and were young enough to brave the broiling sun, and the perpetual *loo*—the hot

desert wind that blew fiercely day and night. The Toons had a nice compact home on the Mission compound in the city, but their time was mainly spent out in the rural areas of the Sindh, where they were working among low-caste tribes known as Kholi and Marawari people. These were really Hindu feudal peasants working under feudal landlords who were Muslims.

The Toons were very much beloved of the Hindu folk, and so they built a sort of home in one of their villages. If ever missionaries worked hard, it was these two. Only in the hottest months of the year—the time when new missionaries were learning their languages and all missionary parents were relating to their children in school—did the Toons escape to the hills of Murree. Even there they pursued language studies of the Sindhi language with its rough fricatives and its liquid vowels.

FOR US, as workers, the Toons were a great help. They had a Landrover which managed the rough dirt roads, and could cross the wilderness where no water was. For the most part the Sindh was irrigated from the great Sindh River, that is, the Indus, especially from irrigation waters that flowed from the Sukkur and Kotri Barrages. Large orchards and vast fields of irrigated wheat and vegetable crops brought some kind of prosperity to the hamlets and cities. They kept the bullock carts and camel lorries busy. For the rest, the traffic was composed of buses, lorries, a modest number of cars and motorcycles, and an innumerable multitude of cycles. Such traffic would wander north and south, east and west, without much discipline. Two rules were the road rules: (i) don’t hit another vehicle; (ii) don’t be hit by another vehicle. There was the incessant tinkle of bells on bullocks and camels, and the horrendous, never-ending sounding of horns, albeit some of them were most musical.

To get to the point of our story I must tell you that my wife Ellen and I were occupied in teaching in the Bible college. At least, I—along with others—did the teaching, whilst my wife held a medical clinic for the students, and generally acted as a mother to them. Our only means of transport in the early days was what we Australians call ‘cycles’, ‘pushbikes’, or just ‘bikes’. We did very well on these, and cycling and the intense

sweat-producing heat kept us reasonably light in weight and slim in body.

Sometimes we had to visit places which were beyond walking or cycling. We needed transport. The Toons were very generous with their offer of transport. How delightful it was to bump and trundle along in a Landrover! How luxurious it was to be driven and not have to walk or cycle! The only trouble spot in our otherwise idyllic situation was that the Toons lacked a sense of time, and even, in some cases, of self-discipline. In some ways they were existential, like the later hippies. Happier than hippies, they related in warm and friendly ways to all Pakistanis and European expatriates, and often would arrive later than they had promised.

There should have been no irritation from this. In Pakistan—at least in those days—time mattered little. Buses were rarely on their scheduled times. Express trains would wait interminably in a station whilst patrons ate in the railway refreshment rooms. Folk would turn up late for church, often complaining that the pastor had not waited until they had arrived. Bank clerks would keep people waiting interminably to pay in or take out money, whilst bureaucrats derived the most solemn enjoyment in keeping people waiting for hours before being engaged by them. We will not speak of the hospitals, especially the admission sections.

So why, then, did I, Gerald Homes, become so annoyed with the Toons? The irritation had built up over the years, the accumulation of wasted time—time after time—when we had waited for our friends for meals, social calls, work-time arrangements and whatnot. Not only on the mission field—as they used to call such places—but all over the world, persons get impatient with one another's idiosyncrasies. The classic example is told in missionary-training colleges of two rather aged female missionaries who lived together for decades. One always kept the kettle on the back of the wood-fuel stove. The other liked it at the front. Each would quietly shift it to the place she liked it, and frustration would build up, tempers would be frayed, and alas—against all good and wholesome teaching of Christian love—an explosion would sometimes occur. There would be sorrow, penitence and forgiveness, but the idiosyncrasy persisted. So the cycle would inevitably be repeated.

Often I would chat about our problem of the Toons to the Toons, preferably to Arthur. His wife Joan had a remarkable way of diminishing the cause of our irritation to fly-spot dimensions. In fact, she had the ability to turn the tables, and make our gentle complaints seem like causeless carping. Arthur was less airy-minded, more specific. He even admitted there was a problem, but hinted that if we just exercised a little love and more tolerance our irritation would cease—be gone, as it were, in the ceaseless *loo*. Every person knows he, or she, is a reasonable creature. Self-justification is inbuilt for sinners, and, for that matter, for most saints.

What irked me was the fact that I was known as the missionary who incessantly preached on love, and who for the most part seemed to practise what I preached. The Toons were the only problem on my relational and theological horizon. Sometimes I would unaccountably fly off the handle and tell the Toons what I thought. This was not often, and always I would humble myself, go back to them and apologise. The apologies were always received with silence, and I scarcely knew what they felt about them.

That I liked the Toons—even loved them—is no overstatement. When we became involved in theological and devotional talk, the hours passed quickly. There would be expressions of affection, and away we would go—both couples delighted.

Mind you, we were not the only ones who became incensed from time to time. So generous with the offers of transport were the Toons that they nigh on wore themselves out fulfilling their voluntary obligations. Unfortunately there was plenty of double-booking, plenty of delays whilst the Toons warmly passed the time of day with shopkeepers, building contractors, rural peasants and social folk from the city and country. From my side, I must admit that I have always been scrupulous about the use of time, and maybe over-scrupulous. But then, time was the way I saw life, for the most part. One did not wish to waste this precious commodity. One had a responsibility to use it properly and fully.

THE DAY came when there was a full explosion. Note, as I tell this story, that righteousness was wholly on my side. Ellen and I had

agreed to come to a social event with very, very poor folk. We were to have a meal with a poor and socially despised community. We knew they could not afford to give us a meal, but then we dared not decline their invitation. It was rarely anyone was invited, and from a missionary point of view it promised well. Had we failed to turn up, they would feel themselves utterly insulted. We promised we would be there, and on time. The Toons promised us they would take us in the Landrover, for the community lived far outside the city.

We waited anxiously. The time allowed for driving to the place and arriving on time gradually melted away. Our hearts sank. Still we waited; still no sign of the Toons. The time of the midday meal was past. Even so, we could arrive late and apologise. We knew the Toons would cover that matter.

The Toons did not arrive. The afternoon wore on. We had been unable to do anything but wait. Near the evening mealtime they appeared. They were sorry, even effusively so, but they were also adamant: it did not really matter. It had just been impossible—for reasons they did not care to name—to get to us and give us transport. Ellen and I could not believe our ears. They continued to be adamant; it was pointless us discussing the matter.

I didn't think so. We had lost a valuable opportunity to have fellowship and friendship with a poor community who would now refuse to believe we respected them and had love for them. I smouldered; I fumed; I smoked; I exploded. Ellen and Joan had departed, gone to fulfil their various domestic tasks, but I thought I had had enough. In a steady, unremitting stream of recall I numbered the innumerable occasions on which the Toons had let us down. Inwardly I was exhorting myself not to go too far, not to overplay the case, but another part of me thought that ridiculous and said we had to have the thing out, once for all. I left nothing unsaid of the whole, unvarnished truth. Then I stopped.

My friend who normally looked like a carefree happy cricketer was white faced. At first silent and listening to me, I had seen—with some satisfaction—the anger growing. I never knew he possessed such powerful invective, such revelatory knowledge of my shortcomings, such reasonable rationalisation of his own

small failures. His words bit in hard, and had I not thought I had righteousness on my side I would have been devastated. By the time he had finished I knew the case was hopeless. He had done no wrong, but I—the preacher and teacher of love—had been harsh and loveless. Could you get anything more hypocritical than *that*?

After that I felt sick at heart. I was sure I had failed. I wanted to finish with the work I was doing in Pakistan and return home. On the one hand the poor folk would think me a liar and a snob, and on the other, the Toons knew me only as a man of unreasonable anger. My mood became one of sickening remorse.

I said to him, 'I'm sorry. I should never have lost my temper. I know there was no love in what I said. Please forgive me.'

He blazed at that. 'You always win, don't you?' he said. 'You blast off. You feel guilty. You ask forgiveness, and so you off-load your guilt onto me. It's become quite a habit, hasn't it?'

I hadn't seen it like that before, but miserably acknowledged the truth to myself. That really finished the matter. I turned away, sick at heart.

OF COURSE, I did not sleep that night. I went over the matter, piecemeal, trying to figure out the puzzle. I knew that our continuance in the work depended upon the outcome of that thinking and praying and talking to the Lord of love. It was almost dawn before the answer came, and as though the Lord Himself was talking to me.

'Yes, you do love Arthur and Joan. You have been provoked, and you have lost your temper. Love is not provoked. Your case was a good one, but your method of presentation was wrong. One act of angry protest does not cancel out all other occasions that are those of love. So do not moon about the matter. Go on, in love, and learn from this occasion.'

'Yes, Lord,' I said, 'but what about the Toons?'

'Leave them be,' he said. 'They are as they are. You do not have to accept their ways that are deficient, but you do have to bear with them, in love.'

'They'll never let me off the hook,' I said. 'They'll always be at me.'

I seemed to feel a smiling nod from the Lord. 'Just let them be,' he said, 'and it will all come through.'

I REMEMBER the months—the many months—that they heckled me, not so much in words as in little ways. There were what you might call minor provocations, little touches of sarcasm or, at least, heavy irony. I knew that love should not react, and so I did not. Love and grace were there to help. As this was going on I had realised how stupid I had been, how foolish to take umbrage, how ridiculous to have had anger over inconsistencies of the couple who themselves loved others, worked for them, cared and thought of them. So I found no difficulty whatever in letting them be. I had learned a great and practical lesson regarding love.

I had noticed a softening towards Ellen and me, and it was gratifying, but I was careful never to criticise, never to interpret a remark as negative. Then one day Arthur came to me.

He said quietly, 'I would like to have a yarn with you.'

We slipped away from the others and sat in my study. 'I have problems,' he said, 'and they are deep—so deep that I know of no other person to whom I can speak. You are the only person I can trust in this situation.'

I could not believe my ears, but tried to give no sign of emotion. He looked at me steadily. 'I am absolutely convinced of your love for us,' he said. 'You have shown it over all these months—eighteen months to be exact. You have never fought back.'

He shared his problem, and gradually we worked our way together to some sort of solution. Then he said quietly. 'You greatly bruised me, but the bruises of the Cross never fester.'

After he went, I tried to analyse what he meant. Did he mean I had bruised him, and the Cross had healed him, or did he mean that what I had said had rightly bruised him, that despite my anger I had done right in bruising him, and what I had said had really come from the Cross? I never did discover, and have never wanted to do so. I am content with the fact that when we are wrong in our modes of relationship, then we should acknowledge the fact before others, ourselves and God.

Within a few weeks Arthur and Joan were due to go on furlough. They gave a quiet testimony at their farewell, and mentioned

what had happened, but Arthur gave no indication of the person who had bruised him. He said gently, 'I think we know of no one we love more.'

Those last few weeks were gentle and kindly, warm and loving. As the theologians say, 'They were times of *agape*.' They were unforgettable.

Some years later Arthur called me across from Australia to have a teaching mission in his parish. The mission was rich and fruitful. The quietness of relationships was the proof that 'love covers the multitude of sins'.

There is nothing else in the world that can do that, and love that is *agape* can do it only because God Himself is that *agape*. He is the One Who covers all.

## LOVE AS THE SUN IN HIS MIGHT

THERE was absolute silence in the old house; that is, apart from the light tapping of the computer keys as his fingers moved rapidly, though gently, across them. He saw the words appear on the screen, and he marvelled. Words had always fascinated him, always acted on him as the bewitchment of beauty draws a young man. He himself was no young man, but he loved the words as they appeared. Today his typing was slightly dyslexic, but he did not mind that. He knew his mind was occupied with more than one thing. A hundred waterfalls were spilling over the mountain edge of his mind and imagination, falling like separated cascades, but beautiful in their rare, translucent light, caused by the white spray of thought as it misted across the valley of his spirit.

He caught himself in this fantasy and smiled. He knew he could go back, even now, and correct those words, which he did. He made a bow towards them of gentle homage and apology. The words were righted under the magic of the hardware and the software he used so lovingly. Words were being recorded—maybe forever. They were his words, but they came from beyond him, as the men of ancient, classical times would have said, ‘from the Muses’. He knew that within him was something more wonderful and powerful than the Muses. It was the love of God. Yes, it was God Himself Who is love, and God’s love is a million jewels, each of them different, so he let the diamonds of thought, the pearls of glory, and amethysts of green mist flow up through his hands until they spread out across the screen, making their likeness, forming their patterns, formulating the thoughts that welled up.

Then, for a moment, he let his hands become passive. They drooped before him, poised lazily, waiting to be commanded—or

impelled—into action again. He loved the silence of the mind as much as he loved the pattering of the keys, the gentle clicking of their seemingly incessant chattering. He loved silence.

The whole house—the big house, with all its rooms and dreams and associations and sentiments—was also silent. He let the silence be calm and tranquil of itself, from itself. The whole place was there in his mind’s eye. Upstairs there were things which belonged to his daughter, shelves of books he often explored as he admired her mind and her choice, and her powerful understanding. There were the rooms where guests stayed, and where the married children came for a short stay, and a withdrawal into sleep, and the closeness of family relationship. There was his wife’s special room where she had her sewing machine, and drawers full of things from the past—stamp albums, photograph albums, papers she treasured, things prepared each year for the next Christmas, or for grandchildren’s birthdays.

Then there was their own bedroom, which was on the same level as his study, and it was the room where they talked or listened or looked at what entertained them. There were secrets there they could tell no one, and would tell no one, but then so many couples had secrets, and probably theirs were little different from the others—just living witnesses to the variety God gives to human beings, and the quality of being which is called life, life that keeps *doing* something.

His eyes came back to the computer keyboard, and he rattled the keys gently and produced more words, and marvelled that just as there were only so many notes to music, so, too, there were only twenty-six letters in the alphabet, and thousands upon thousands upon thousands of words in the language—his language: English. It was the words he revelled in. He never ceased to be surprised at the way they appeared, and the way they selected themselves to be one alongside another and the others. He never ceased to be astonished—and delighted—at the thoughts they formed, and then their adding of thought to thought, idea to idea, and all the time a picture painting itself, a song forming its pattern and bringing its music, and the never-ending art of narrative and the progress towards the goal which was always beautiful, albeit there was much pain along the way to it.

Again, he let his hands drop on the keys, and allowed his mind to wander ahead of what he knew he was going to write, going to say to his world, going to tell other travellers and pilgrims who heard him wonderingly, but were—some few of them—deeply grateful. He was so grateful to them for being grateful to him, and he was grateful to the loving God who gave him such fluency of mind, and such loveliness of utterance.

The silence brought him to her. She was somewhere in the big house. Maybe she was upstairs fingering her stamps, or tidying up her photographs into frames that portrayed the family at various stages of life and action. Perhaps she was running off some little thing on her chittering-chattering, half-singing sewing machine, or maybe she was just sitting for a moment, thinking her special thoughts.

Probably she was not upstairs. Almost certainly she was in the large living room where the old-fashioned dining suite was standing, the table with the carved legs enclosed by the four chairs with smaller carved legs. Against the wall there would be the two larger chairs which in old days were for Father and Mother, or—if they ever visited them—for Grandmother and Grandfather. Grandfathers, both of them, were long ago dead. Grandmothers, long ago, were also dead. Now they, themselves, were Grandfather and Grandmother, and it seemed that they had been this for a long time.

So she had loved the fact that the dining suite was an heirloom, and from the chairs she had taken the faded tapestries of former years, and in their place had made new tapestries. The colours were bright, but not gaudy, and they embodied things she wanted to emphasise, such as the Cross that was central to them—central also to the cedar piano-seat which was not a stool but a long and sturdy box-seat with shapely legs that were of a different colour and a plainer carving.

She would be sitting beside her special window where the light flowed onto her tapestry frame, and she would be stitching in the trees and the sky, the clouds and the tops of trees that started at the sky and went down, branch by branch and leaf by leaf, to the sturdy trunks and the roots that had made their way into the grass-covered soil. He marvelled at her tapestries,

because they transcended the original painting or photograph as she skilfully selected other shades of the colours, deeper or lighter, duller or brighter, so that the completed work was a painting in colours that the original artist had not chosen. She disliked stereotypes, and did not care to reproduce them. The art which was hers made its way into the tapestry-painting.

You could almost say, too, that she wove into the texture of the tapestry the music to which she listened from her stereo amplifier with its gadgets for records, tapes and CDs. When they had their radio talkback sessions her mind came alive to lively debate. Very fixed in some of her ideas, and most liberal in others, she would debate with the announcer and talkback speakers. All this was in her mind, of course. She picked up the vibes of their personalities very quickly, and perhaps sometimes she was not right in her perceptions. He knew also of her little habit of talking to other drivers whilst she herself was driving their shiny Toyota. She would caution the car ahead or behind, or the one cutting in, or the one driven by an old man or an old lady—those who wore hats, and recalled dreams of the past as they drove. These were the ones who were often timid in driving, but nevertheless alert spectators of the roses in the front gardens of houses, the brilliant bougainvilleas, or just the smoothness of green lawns cut and growing again.

That was her world, and he figured in it somewhat. She would ponder the meal for the evening, if it were not already on the top of their slow-combustion wood stove. She would think of the TV programme for the night, or the excellent book she had discovered after a sorting through of the pornographic drivel that earned some writers unlauded money.

So he left his desk and went to see what she was doing, making the quiet contact that would charge him with relational reality again and bring him back to his beloved desk to tap the keys to new creativeness, to devising new ideas, or refurbishing old ones.

When he stood beside her she scarcely looked up. She liked him being there, and his appreciation of her latest tapestry or embroidery. Sometimes—though not often—he would wander around the large room looking at the framed tapestry, or he would renew his memory by looking at the photographs of their own

family—backwards to their parents, sisters and brothers until he arrived at their wedding pictures, and the selection of their children from babies to adults, after which he would look at their babies which were even now also growing towards adulthood. He never failed to marvel at the cavalcade of the family.

Then he might become restless and wander out into the garden, especially the large vegetable garden. Afresh he would give himself over to the marvel of a seed sleeping for its appointed time in the rich humus-and-manure-tilled soil, and the awakening, the short green shoot, the opening of cotyledons, or first leaves. His garden was like a regiment, all plants in long rows, and often standing to attention. Some refused regimentation and spilled all over the place, drooping and giving their yield with a kind of pride. He marvelled at the variety of colours, the different shades of variety: green, red, yellow, brown, white, and purple.

In the spring he would wander further even than the vegetable garden and the sweeping green lawns, and look at the tiny native flowers in their acres of bush-scrub, some nestling flat against the soil, and others on slender stalks, the native orchids and the rambling creepers, the higher heathers and the grevilleas, the early wattles and the mid-spring wattles, and whatever. He would marvel at the world hidden with its glories from humans who would not seek it out.

He would also listen to the birds—birds whose sounds and songs had been mostly muted until he had received his listening aid, an appliance that opened up to him afresh a world of audible beauty. Wattle birds with their sweet, sharp songs, currawongs with their fluted cries, magpies warbling in sheer delight, rosellas with their long calls to one another and the harsher cries of cockatoos and galahs, to say nothing of the even harsher crying of the black cockatoos who sought the gumnuts and a rare tree of *radiata* with its mature pine cones.

ALWAYS he would return to where she was listening to her classical music, working her tapestry towards its conclusion, and he thought, 'She is no different from me. She wants to leave behind something which will link the past with the present of those who have sprung from her, or through us. She leaves stories in

tapestry and embroidery, and that is what I do when I weave my stories, or write my understanding of God, Man and creation. Human beings love stories: they love to learn more and more about their own race, about human flesh and blood. They want to know how hearts and minds and wills work, and they are fascinated with what they see. Something more is covered by all this than they hitherto knew. It is not only an increase in power they desire, but a growing in knowledge, and, if possible, a maturing in wisdom.

'They love stories whether they be woven into tapestry, into exquisite embroidery, or into other forms of art. They want to see what things look like through other eyes. They are eager for other impressions, other revelations, new breakings-through of the many mysteries of the creation.

'So,' he thought, 'when I write a story I am speaking something new, or confirming something old. I am helping to stabilise reality, confirming reality, but yet living the simplicity of what is mystery. When I tackle the questions asked by the human race, or perhaps, even, unseen celestials, then I am giving something that I have received to the race into which I have been born, and the universe of which I am a part. So, then, nothing is insignificant. This is what life is all about.'

It was then that one of those unusual cavalcades of memories passed through his mind, a procession of the many men and women, young and old, and children of all ages whom he had met in his lifetime. He marvelled at the variety of human beings with whom he had had contact, some of them relating most intimately to him, some of them standing away from him for various reasons of their own. But they were the ones he had known, and so in some way they could never be forgotten, and if in his ageing some might eventually be lost beyond recall, they would be there in the cells of the vast data-bank every human being carries around with himself or herself. They would be there to the last, and perhaps even beyond that.

As he thought of the friends of his childhood, his youth, his days in the armed forces, the post-war years, the amazing interlacing of old and new friends, the ones who were like butterflies and sipped what nectar he could provide and were lost to sight

forever, and then the others who not only stayed to receive but to give, he fell to marvelling again, astonished perpetually at the gifts and talents, the arts and the understandings, of those he had met. Some had occasioned sorrow and pain, and some had brought their traumas to him to heal, their misapprehensions to dispel, their jangled thinking to quieten to plain simplicity, and their fears to quell. Sometimes he had been able to help, and sometimes he had sought help. What a cavalcade they all represented!

HE MET the younger man at the airport, and brought him to the big house. He and others would be leaving in a day or so for a retreat, temporary withdrawal into quietness, into sharing the matter of life together, drawing afresh on the old resources—the uttered word of the living God, the praise and the prayer that surrounded such, and then the disbursement, mutually, of such wisdom as they had acquired and stored over the years. These times delighted him. He might draw sketches in his mind, call almost forgotten wisdom back to mind, and shape more stories for his computer to record. Wisps of life, whimsies that were momentary, flashes of discernment and knowledge—these they would share mutually.

He and his younger friend walked around the vegetable garden, looking at ripening tomatoes in the hothouse, cauliflowers creaming out of their green bouquets of leaves, strawberries brilliant red against their own vivid green foliage, tassels peeping from the tips of the sweet corn plants, and the potato bushes beginning to show their purple and yellow flowers, whilst zucchinis almost shone in their dark metallic green, and both of them savoured the natural beauty of it all.

‘He certainly loves all His creation,’ the younger man said. ‘You can even feel it pressing through its present restraints, as though bursting to be free to praise Him forever.’

The older man nodded. ‘I have always found it intriguing that He Who creates is Himself the Gardener, the Husbandman of it all.’ He looked down at the strawberry patch. ‘God loves strawberries, eh?’ he asked.

The younger man nodded. ‘Of course,’ he said. ‘That is why we love Him. We love Him for loving what He loves.’

They went into the house, and she stayed seated beside her tapestry frame, even as she greeted the visitor.

The three chatted, and then the younger man made his way up the stairs to his allotted room, putting his beloved books beside the bed so that he could read them after the evening meal when he would relax and think about the retreat to come. When he came down silently, he saw the older man and his wife talking softly, quietly chatting about this and that of their lives—the garden, the children and grandchildren, the retreat of the morrow.

He stood watching them, and the same marvelling that had come into the spirit of the older man visited him also. ‘What love!’ he said to himself. ‘They often disagree, even quarrel. They are both strong-minded, but that seems to make for strong love, or even issues from it.’ Then he thought how strong is God’s love, how He had argued with the people who were His, and how they had quarrelled, and how fierce is love when it is jealous for its beloved.

He thought back to his own wife and children, and the long distance he had flown to be with other men of love in their retreat, and it seemed that love is always a great mystery. Analysis cannot define it, dissection cannot discover it. ‘Great is the mystery of godliness,’ he quoted to himself, and added, ‘Great is the mystery of love.’ He thought, ‘Loved by God, loving Him, and loving others; love in its forms of creation and redemption and ultimate glory,’ and a strong surge of love impelled him to say to them as they turned to look at him, ‘Those that love Thee are as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.’

Both he and the older man knew that these were the concluding words of the great utterance of Deborah the woman-prophet, and they knew how wise she had been. In that moment, they were all wise, these three lovers, for they had come to know that in every form, love is the outworking of the wisdom of God.

## LOVE IS THE TRUE PAIN

Love is the true pain: true pain is the love  
That lives not for itself, but for the love  
Which has come to it. In God is pain.  
God's pain is not the anguish that destroys  
The searing harshness that comes to Him  
From the rebel spirit of Man  
And celestials become demonic,  
Leaving their first estate.  
It is not the pain of jealousy  
Made bitter by holy lips that press  
Or teeth Divine that bite  
On acrid aloes of Man's sin.  
It is not the irrational anger  
Against gods destroying the beauty  
Of the original Man.  
This is not pain Divine,  
But pain Man reads upwards from himself  
Into the Eternal Love—Himself Who's love,  
As Love Himself.

Love is the true pain that searches out  
The beleaguered spirit of lost Man,  
That reaches out to where sin has confused,  
Where will in its acrid anger—  
Misplaced against the Deity—  
Burns in its own acidic rage,  
Baffling its inward search and outward reaching  
To what is the image in itself  
Of the Divine Real—the true God,

The Being that is love Himself  
Who in His heart implores all day  
And into the reaches of eternal night  
That Man return to Him, come home  
To the Divine love that gives itself  
On the timbers twisted by Man's hate  
Into Cross shape and Cross rages,  
And Cross rejection.

On the Cross is the true pain, yet it began  
Before even the creation of the  
Purposed peerless Man, and the utter glory  
Of the commanded creation. It always was  
Without beginning, as it always is  
Without cessation. Futurity  
Is love come to the now-time,  
And love taking what it loves  
To the eternal time of love.  
Love is the pain that kills  
Forever all pain, that brings to birth anew  
That which had died to love—the spirit loved,  
Breathed into Man until he glowed  
As the living image, destined to become  
The palpable glory of the Living God  
From time into all eternity.

Was it that Man saw in the Reality—  
In the One Whom he imaged—  
The impossibility of no-pain,  
The essential nature of the essential love  
That must inevitably—though of free choice—  
Reveal the mystery of its Being  
In the timbered Cross, in the love-pain  
That redeems the created beloved? Did Man  
Know the full Nature when the serpent moved  
To beguile the woman and entice through her  
The knowledgeable man who chose  
The path that would never know pain?

Was it rejection of love that is pain  
 Until that love brings through to no-pain  
 What it has created? If this be so,  
 Then deception was deceived.

Love is a mystery—love that has pain—  
 And pain is a sad sorrow where love is refused,  
 When sharing in the Divine Nature is rejected,  
 When Man seeks to kill pain out of his own sources  
 And turn the earth to manufactured anodynes  
 And tranquillising measures. Man fears pain,  
 But—deeper—fears the love that loves  
 Man in his pain, his deep distress self-wrought  
 And making spirit all awry in the matchless beauty  
 Of the granted gift—the joyous creation.

Faith leaves it there, even when the brain  
 Ponders the great imponderable;  
 Ruminates in the cud of the mind  
 The mystery that veils itself until it's seen  
 On Calvary's peerless hill. Here the true anger  
 Burns against evil, is a high furnace  
 That dissolves the dross; is a raging wrath  
 That knows love's hate against the dread evil  
 Of the love-rejecters—both celestial and mundane—  
 Until all evil's judged; until the pain  
 That wracks Man's spirit is forever gone,  
 Banished into no-being and no-pain.  
 This is the love that is the true pain.

We then, who love, dare not escape—  
 Nor would we—from the heart of love.  
 This only moves us to the perpetual giving,  
 The never asking in return. Rageless we range  
 The hurts and haunts of men with the Divine balm  
 That brings its healing salve  
 To the lost and helpless spirits  
 He once encapsulated within his heart

That suffered the eternal pain  
 In the infinite compassing within the finite time,  
 All that was human lostness, human death  
 And human unknowing of the love that's pain.

## LOVE IS AS STRONG AS DEATH

SHE sat in the morning study-meeting, wondering why the line of irritation she was feeling was now thickening, expanding, beginning to rub the edges of her nerves, setting her wholly on edge.

It had been the songs that had been the first irritant: they were songs of love. The word 'love' came to her either as an empty thing, or something filled with menace. She resented both forms of attack, for she knew love must be the best of all words, especially as the man who taught them was always saying, 'The most powerful thing of all, the most theological thing of all, is love.' She dimly understood what he was driving at, but because it was beyond her reach she felt frustrated. Restriction always worried her: she knew that beyond restriction lies genuine freedom, but she had never really come into such an experience of liberty.

If she had resentment, then it was not primarily at the man who taught them, so much as it was against the others who received the teaching. They seemed to be free, to be able to move around with joy, to glow when they shared with one another over a cup of tea or coffee, or just had intimate interchanges, standing in the aisle and chatting. She would always move away from this sort of thing when the break came between the two periods of teaching.

At the moment it was just the beginning, the irritation making her feel hopeless when she ought to have felt something stronger, something of assurance regarding life. She knew that as a small child she had always wanted to be loved, and, for that matter also, to love, but then she expected the initiative to come from her father and mother. When that did not happen she felt bereft. Whilst her expectation waned, her demand for love increased. When love

did not happen, she had developed a slow anger that had built up, layer upon layer. No one ever told her that love was something in which you took the initiative.

It was the same with boys—she waited for them to come to her, but something about her cut them off from commencing a relationship, and certainly from developing one. This worried her, and she set about making herself attractive, yet the more attractive she became the more impregnable she seemed to be against any who might try to penetrate her defences. So the matter compounded itself.

Then the terrible thing happened—the virtual rape. It happened with the young man she had thought least likely to have her in his sights. He was a silent boy, silent through high school, and silent in their first couple of years at college. What was more, he was an artistic person, one who painted and wrote poetry. Years later she came to the conclusion that he must have been obsessed with her, and had hoped she might have given him signs of recognition, and even of acceptance.

She first noticed that he followed her from the bus to her home, but at a distance; and then later, each afternoon after lectures; and then some nights when there were lectures at the university. He would be there in the library, but seated away from her. These nights he would catch the same bus, and follow at a distance. She sensed something unnatural in it, but not danger.

When it happened she was unbelieving at first. He had come upon her suddenly, torn at her clothing, muttered harshly as he panted and urged himself upon her. She was athletic, and she fought him. She knew he was surprised at her strength, especially when she kned him in the stomach and the groin—as they had been taught in self-defence exercises at the gym. His hot breath disgusted her, and although she could not see his eyes she knew they were blazing with passion. Finally she escaped, but not before he had mauled her down to the flesh of her body. Suddenly with a half shriek he had turned and fled.

In all the years the memory had never fully left her. Her parents were out for the night, and she removed all traces of the happening. She had both showered and bathed. She had washed her clothes, intending to mend the torn dress, but later she had

wrapped it in black plastic and put it into the garbage bin. Her mother never came to know, much less her father.

The boy disappeared. Later she heard he had gone to another State, and she almost felt pity for him. Just before graduation Andrew came on the scene, and his approach to her was fair and open and honest, and she felt no fear. She was glad of his warmth for her, but she was wary about closeness, and his touching her, until finally the other seemed to drop away from her, and she knew some sweetness in his affection.

The wedding had been good, and, for that matter, the honeymoon. She was free enough, but she kept wondering whether all this could last, it was so wonderful. It did last. It lasted through three babies, and it had lasted until the teacher of their group began teaching on the matter of human love.

She knew she loved Andrew, and their son—the oldest—and his two sisters. She was kept busy in looking after them and helping Andrew. She considered herself to be a woman of faith. Even so, she had times of fear, nights when she dreamed Andrew had left her, when tragedies were awaiting her, when the good dream of her husband and children was about to terminate. She knew she kept demanding affection from Andrew, and if he seemed not to give it she would become miserable. She tried not to make her demands apparent, but she knew he recognised them, and tried to accommodate, but sometimes he was resistant. Then her fears would come back, and sometimes the memory of that virtual rape would make her question the whole matter of femininity and masculinity. She knew that at times she wanted to run off and scrub herself clean, and fight her way back to peace.

SHE liked doctrine, liked it very much when their group teacher would help them to bite into the truth that they were being taught. She liked history as it was interpreted to her through truth and faith, and the coming of Christ into the world as the Son of the Father, and his work. When, however, there was talk of God's love she would go cold. When there was talk of the love of gratitude, she would feel lonely and amiss. She acknowledged to herself that her love for her husband and children was possessive, yet the more she seemed to possess them—to bring them under

obligation to her—the more she seemed to be in danger of losing them.

Sometimes the hymns of love did attract her, and she could feel faint flickers of a reality she scarcely knew. Love from God, love to God, love to others, love from others—these things seemed unreal, and even threatening. Then—as though out of the blue—their teacher announced they would be doing the ancient set of love songs called 'The Canticles' or 'The Song of Solomon'. She had a short-lived spasm of curiosity, and then a feeling of deep revulsion. She really wasn't interested in what she had always thought to be a number of private communications between two young and infatuated lovers. She had never been one for the 'Mills and Boon' type of romance, and she saw through most novels as being unreal or messy in the area of human sexuality. She grew increasingly disgusted with display of bodies in seductive dressing and modes, and she thought the portrayal of acts which were meant to happen inside marriage a futile exercise. Nothing of this kind stirred her, and she was grateful for that. She was also grateful to Andrew for his caring way in their own marital relationships; she thought there could be no more than that, and in any case she had no yearning for special experiences of love. Even so, there was always a faint sense of unease, a wondering at the constant harping by poets, singers, composers of opera, and even her friends, on the fact that love was a mystery that continually had to be explored and lived in experience.

So their teacher who had always been strong on doctrine and the practice of faith now seemed to be teaching upon an area unknown to her, and she felt a distinct distaste for it. She was partly moved by his theology of man and woman, and the fact that initially the woman had been drawn from the man, rather than created as a separate entity on her own, as one destined to meet her opposite number, the male. That seemed to break down her ideas of equality, although she had never thought much of equality just as a matter of uniformity. Their teacher taught that Man—the human race—was male-female, whose unity had been wrought in and by creation, and so that whilst there might be differentiations in the genders they were all with a view to a mutual complementarity.

His introductory essay to the text of 'The Canticles' began to alarm her, especially when he pointed out that there was a distinction between love as *eros* and love as *agape*. When he said that *eros* always expected and demanded something of the one—or thing—that it loved, then she began to be alarmed. *Agape*, he said, was always wanting to give, and it never demanded a return, although it was delighted enough if such happened to come its way. *Eros* set out to give in order to get. It would go to all lengths to give, but behind its giving was the expectation of getting. *Agape* set out to give and give and give, with no thought of return.

This puzzled her. If she had always demanded love from others, wanted them to take the initiative, then—by the same token—she had always responded. This had been the case with Andrew and the children. She knew they loved her, and found comfort in her strength. She told herself, sensibly, that she and Andrew could never have anything better than what they had. Both were satisfied with that. Neither was given to romance as a thing in itself. To speak of something more than *eros* and call it *agape* seemed to her to be impractical idealism. Even so, she was grateful for the essay because she learned new things from it. At the same time, she felt uneasy when she looked at Andrew. She was sure their love was mutually acceptable, but she also knew it was a mutual arrangement of giving and taking, whereas their mentor had said it was a matter of giving without looking for a return. One might receive, but then one did not simply take as though taking were an inborn human right. *Agape* laid down no conditions, demanded no right! It was not 'on the take'. All of this was puzzling to her.

SHE went to him after the fifth session and said she thought they might be wasting their time. The text of the book seemed to her to be run-of-the-mill 'boy meets girl; girl meets boy. They fall in love. They are infatuated mutually. They get married and get joy.' What more was there to tell? She was more than a little surprised by her own approach to this one who was her mentor. They rarely talked except on general things, and now she was virtually giving him instructions to return to rich and thought-

provoking theology, rather than indulge the senses in some nostalgia for the days of youthful romance.

He listened to her thoughtfully. Then he said, 'Maybe many of us have been satisfied with *eros* when we really ought to be living in *agape*.' He stared at her thoughtfully, 'Maybe we feel guilty because we do not have a full marriage. That might account for us seeing "The Song" as pointless. Perhaps we have never come to marriage as it is in *agape*.'

Further than that he didn't go, but the next week he slipped in a more intensive study on the terms '*agape*' and '*eros*', and by the time he was finished, her heart was beating rapidly. It was as though a new world opened up to her, but it was not opened up by the man-woman thing, or the untasted delights of *agape* in marriage that one might have missed, so much as it was a revelation of the heart of the Father in sending His Son to become man forever, in abandoning him up to death and all that lay in death.

'Death,' the man said, 'is really *eros*. *Eros* is self-seeking, self-gaining, self-extending and self-preserving love. *Agape* places the other person first and does not try to use that one, but gives to it all that it can—all that is good for it.'

He went into a description of the Cross, where, he said, the Son received from the Father the weight of the world's guilt, evil and pollution. He had not only exposed himself to it, but had received it into himself.

What intrigued her, and set her heart beating faster, was his statement that the Son actually did not wait for any human being to invite him into its tragedy, its selfishness, its evil and its pollution. He moved into every life and embraced these terrible elements, somehow immolating them in his own love and purity, thus defusing them of their evil power, thus consuming their pollution by the utter purity of his mind and conscience, and thereby bearing the whole weight of all that was the evil of each person—the evil of every person born into humanity.

Whether it was the words of the speaker, or the strange revelation that God often gives along the way of human movement, she suddenly caught a sight of herself demanding acceptance and aid from all others. It must have happened from birth—perhaps even in the womb. She could not remember having ever given

herself to anyone or to any purpose other than her own. She saw that her affection for her parents was a love which would never have moved them. She had no impetus to love. Even Andrew came into that class of action. He was her husband, *her* husband. She possessed him, and would let him possess her, but only within a safe mutuality. Her children!—she wondered how she had really viewed them.

The picture kept coming back of the personal, intimate union of the Son with her in the dark and terrible hours of the Cross. The revelation may not have been a blinding one, but it was most unsettling. She heard the man keep repeating, 'His union with us was love's communion. *Agape* lifted us up out of mire and guilt and heaviness. It gave us joy in place of misery, but he had first to bear the misery.' He repeated what he had often said over the weeks, '*Eros* is natural to us, but *eros* is death. *Agape*—pure Divine love—brings life, and a new selflessness that is other-person centred, even other-person *concentred*. It does not merely bring *union*, but brings *communion*.'

She pondered those words on the way home, and she began to see her children from a changing viewpoint. She looked curiously at her husband as he greeted her in the usual kindly fashion. She wondered whether she knew this man at all! She wondered what lay within him, what special capability for true love-relationships.

She thought, 'If one has only ever known another in and by *eros* love, then the person one sees in and by *agape* is different altogether. One has to get to know this new or different person.'

One night, as she lay awake pondering these things, she suddenly remembered the boy who had once attempted to rape her. She wondered why tears started to her eyes until she realised that he had had a deep passion for her, and was trying in his fierce and terrible way to break down her defences, the impregnable rock of her secluded being. She remembered the way he had looked at her in the library, how he had followed her for months from the bus, and had never attacked her. She realised that all through the years she had had a hate for him in her heart for his attempt to invade her. Repelling him—and others—had been her self-love, her self-protecting love, and in essence this was indifference to his invading attempt to get the love he wanted.

She found herself feeling deeply sorry for him, and wondered what had happened to him over the years. Christ had entered into his folly as well as her own: she wondered whether he had come to know that.

SHE found herself eager to listen to their weekly teacher in his two morning sessions. She wanted to know how the two lovers of 'The Canticles' met each other, shared adoration one of the other, and the careless joy they gave one another. She found herself wanting to love as they did, and knew then for certain that *agape* in marriage was altogether different from *eros* in marriage.

The speaker said, 'If you think there is nothing much more to marriage than "the first fine careless rapture", and if you think that sex is a matter of learned technique, and if you are trapped in *eros*, then you will see your spouse from an *eros* point of view, and finally you will discover that you see God as the *eros*-God, and not as the God who is *agape* itself—Himself. In fact, you will see all human beings as *eros*-persons. That is how you will interpret life.'

She knew then that that was the way it had always been, and she was stunned. In the same moment she knew she did not have to go on being that way. In any case, something had been changing in her during the past few weeks, and she found that, because of the forgiveness which had come to her for her selfish way of living and loving, she had thought time and again of the boy who had tried to rape her. She knew release in forgiving him, and knowing forgiveness for the seclusion of herself from those who had wanted to love her.

She felt almost shy when Andrew would return from work, and often found herself trembling. He had been quick to sense the difference in her, and to respond to it. The complaints she had often felt in regard to the children and to Andrew seemed mainly to have dissolved. Little things which had previously caused her to rise in quick angers now seemed less and less to irritate her. There was more serenity in the family, even if the children were their normal selves—often having their fights with one another, being egotistical and, well, children.

The time came when she herself initiated acts of love. She

reached out to Andrew to give herself, and if this was often done with a lot of trembling and spasmodic fear, yet it succeeded in a way previously beyond her doing. She knew she would have to tell it all to Andrew, and she did. At first he did not understand what she was saying to him, but then he began to grasp the truth, and to respond in much the same way.

She was grateful to the writer of 'The Song', and for the living example—and reality—of true human love, love that had behind it the very love of God Himself. How simple that couple were—a king of a palace and a rustic maid who loved all things rural and took her man by the hand and led him back to her childhood haunts, and made him, at least for a time, one who found reality in simplicity, and freedom in a woman's pure innocence and childlike naïveté.

Only because she wrote gratefully to her teacher about her discovery of the Divine in human love could the writer of this—her story—repeat something of the happening called 'The Song of Solomon', especially in its present mode, since love never dies, and is as strong as death, and transcends even that.

## THE POWER OF WEAK, WEAK LOVE

**I** REMEMBER this man well, the man I met in Darwin, even before Cyclone Tracy took its toll of homes, trees, vehicles on the road and ships in the harbour, as well as the minds of the appalled population. In fact, it was early in that year, when I was speaking to a large group of men assembled at a dinner, that this man stood, agreeing with what I had said, and at the same time amplifying it.

'Love,' he said, 'is the greatest power in the world.'

To others that would have sounded like a cliché or—at best—an aphorism. To him it was a forceful statement of the truth.

'When I came to Darwin,' he said, 'I walked in like any hippie —no shoes to my feet and no shirt on my back. I had nothing; anyway, nothing but my wits, and the power to talk people into things. I talked a car company into giving me the franchise of all their vehicles for Darwin. Me! You'll laugh, but they did, and in no time I had a business, and then a wife and our three children.

'I worked like a Trojan. Day and night I worked. I built up that business and was one of the most prosperous men in the town. Power? I had it all. I knew how to sell cars, trade in the old ones. I knew how to get the ears of powerful people. I became one of them. I was into the Service Clubs too, and got more and more influence.

'At first my wife admired me, and she enjoyed the good things we could have. She tried to keep up with my living, but then she wasn't built that way, so gradually we slipped away from each other. She often told me that if I didn't pull my horns in, then it would be the end of our marriage.

'I knew that couldn't be, and I kept on becoming more prosperous, and of course drinking more, and into everything—sport, entertainment, and times with the fellows in both business and fun.

‘She said she had had it, and it was up to me, but she was leaving and going down the track, going South with the kids. I could stay on and be rich, but she wanted a husband and not just a successful business man. The kids wanted a father, and not one who was out all the time.’

‘She went to one of the ministers and talked the matter over with him, and before I knew it she took on religion and consolation. She was different, but she wasn’t going to change her mind about me. I could talk to the minister, if I liked, but even he couldn’t change her mind, she said, because she was going to give the kids a fair go with her folk down South. At least there would be grandparents, and, as you know, Darwin just doesn’t have grandparents.’

The man with the special car franchise was right. In those days you could scarcely find a Grandma or a Grandpa in the whole city—except of course amongst the old Territorials who had been there for two or three generations. Most folk used to come north on short-term jobs, and they would live in those new high-stilted houses that Cyclone Tracy blew down in the Christmas of that year.

THE MAN with the car franchise told the Men’s Group how he had talked to the parson, and how the parson had tried to get him to take up religion, so he could keep his wife, but then not just so he could keep his wife, but so he could be a trustworthy husband to her, and a proper father to his children.

‘I wasn’t going to come at that,’ he said. ‘It sounded too much like a racket, but then I thought of her and the children going South and I was in a bit of a panic. All the time I didn’t think it could really be happening to me, but it was.’

‘What I found hard to handle was the fact that she had changed, changed altogether. She was a woman without hardness. She was lovely. Just on the matter of going South she was firm. I liked her as a new person, all filled with love, and I realised what I was missing, so I went back to the minister, and he talked to me about God and about love—about the love He showed on the Cross in His Son—and I wondered where I had been all my life—why I hadn’t heard or seen this before.’

‘So I went back to my wife and told her that love had at last come to me and our marriage would be different. Even then, I thought she would trust me with the business, and that we could handle that together and still stay in Darwin. Most of you know me, and you know I’m not soft. I was the man who walked into Darwin as poor as a beggar, and became one of the richest, and I was sure not even my wife could change all that.’

‘Well, love changed it. God changed it. We both fell in love like we never had been before, and I thought it was so good she would never go South; but she said, “No, it’s South or not at all.”

‘That love is a great thing I came to see, but I never thought I could get to a place where I would leave all I had built up, just for love of my wife and children. But I have. I saw one night that my business was nothing to this new life and this new love we’ve found, so do you know what I did? I advertised for a good sheep and cattle property, and I put the estate agents on to the matter, and, do you know, someone wanted to buy my business the day I wanted to sell it? And next week the missus, the kids and I are off South, South-East in fact. We are off to Queensland, and we are going to be out in the bush where no one can come in and get me so busy that I’ll be giving time to anything but the wife and the family.’

He looked around the men with a great grin of triumph. ‘If it was power, then I had it, but it couldn’t keep us together as a family. Now the power of love has made us one, and will keep us one, even when the kids grow up and get married.’

When he sat down, the men all applauded him. I’ve often thought of him—along with others—when I have thought again about the weakness of love as a thing as men see it, but when it comes to the pinch, that same love always wins out.

PAUL wrote to his friends at Rome, and those at Rome whom he had never seen, and he spoke about the gentleness of love, in chapters 14 and 15 of his now-famous Letter. In chapter 13 he said, ‘Owe no one anything except to love one another.’ At the end of chapter 12 he said, ‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good,’ and this could be translated, ‘Resist evil in every way and conquer it with good’.

Evil cannot be overcome by evil. Taking up the aggressive weapons of evil will accomplish nothing. The Christian has to overcome evil with good, that is, by means of love. How can he—or she—do this when love is so weak? Love's powerful nature lies in its seeming weakness. Paul told the Corinthian church that only when he was weak was he really strong. He reminded them that socially, financially, politically and even intellectually they were regarded as weak—most of them being slaves, anyway, but then, look at what the love of God in Christ's Cross had accomplished in their lives!

John told the readers of his prophecy—the Book of the Revelation—that they would have to live by the principle of weakness. 'If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints,' that is, they had always to submit to the powers that overcome in this world, but their submission would not be a craven one. Even so, they must never take up the sword, never seek to counter worldly power with worldly power. Evil powers might destroy their body, but such could never touch them in their hearts and minds and spirits. In prison they would be powerful in love, and if they were slain, then all their deeds would follow them, and testify to the true power of love. No one's will has ever been won by force, but many wills have surrendered under the power of love. This is the way good overcomes evil.

HISTORY'S greatest act of love was the Cross. 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' was Christ's powerful maxim. All his enemies he counted as friends in his death, even if they chose to continue their hatred and enmity towards him. When he was reviled he reviled not again, but bore the sins of his enemies in his own body on the Tree. 'He was crucified through weakness,' said Paul, but it was the weakness of love. Only this love could overcome evil. At the Cross the prince of this world—Satan—was virtually destroyed, and principalities and powers were made to be an open show before the entire world.

Christ could have called his legions of angels, but that kind of

force accomplishes nothing. He had to be the weakest thing in all creation in order to be the most loving. Men may think they can see love apart from the Cross or even prior to seeing the Cross, but they are wrong. Not even the richness of being created and sustained by God can be properly understood until men and women go through the crucible of the Cross. In his weakness there, he took upon him the sins of the whole world and dealt with them, thus showing the love of the Father who had made him to be the atonement for all sins. The principle of the seed of wheat falling into the ground and dying in order that it might germinate and bring forth much fruit is underlined in the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied'.

HISTORY has shown that what Tertullian said has always been true, namely, 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church'. They who have 'loved not their lives even unto death' are the lovers who have brought life to a world of lost men and women, who have helped to take away the misery and the evil, and in place of these have brought comfort and solace and new hope to the downcast and the downtrodden.

Even so, those that were persecuted, imprisoned, put to the sword, crucified and killed have not just surrendered their lives as an act in itself. They were no worshippers of surrender for its sake, or even of dying for dying's sake. Like their Lord, they suffered death to great purpose. He came to proclaim the Kingdom and usher in its gospel of grace. His followers have been killed for what they have proclaimed. In extraordinary ways they have overcome the evil of the world with the good of love, and in the last days of human living it will be the sword which is the word of God that will subdue the nations. That word is essentially the word of love. There will be no imperialism but the imperialism of love. Under it men shall groan and quake, or they will be transformed by the love that bled for them at the Cross and that now intercedes for them at the right hand of God.

RETURNING to the acts of love: I have seen many a husband or wife won over by the new love of his—or her—spouse. I have

seen little children learn of God's love at Sunday School or some other place and bring back the simplicity of 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so' to the family, and I have seen it pierce the hard armour of a father or shake the indifference of a mother. I have seen so many weep when they hear 'the old, old story of Jesus and his love', and have seen them changed for life by that love. However, it is not of these touching incidents that I would talk, so much as what have been called 'the returns of love'. By 'returns of love', I do not mean the benefits the one who loves may receive, so much as the response that is given to that love.

In a very moving passage in one of his volumes of *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth points out clearly that the intensity, so to speak, of God's love to a person evokes an equally strong response from that one who is loved, and the theologian gives his reasons for this claim:

It is worth pausing a moment to consider how inconceivable is this clear and simple fact—that to the eternal love which is in God and with which He has turned to man, there corresponds the fact that man may love God. Is not the mystery of reconciliation almost greater on the human side, from below, than it is on the divine? It is at least as great. For how can it be true, possible and actual, that a man loves God as God loves him? We will leave aside for the time being the frailty and imperfection and doubtfulness with which even the greatest saint does this. In spite of all that may rightly and necessarily be said against his love, in face of the whole heap of mud and dross and rubble and ashes under which his little love is hidden, in face of the fact that there is nothing praiseworthy or meritorious in this action, it takes place by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit that small and sinful man may love the great and holy God, responding to the divine self-offering with his own . . . As truly as God loves us we may love Him in return. It is quite incomprehensible, but we may do it. Let us therefore do it (Vol. IV, Pt 2, pp. 790–791).

What the famous theologian claims has to be true. Given in that from our side human power does not equal the Divine, yet the stronger the love of God—so to speak—the stronger the response of man is bound to be; indeed, forced to be. If we go back to our car merchant at the beginning of this story, we see that it was the intensity of his wife's love for him and her children that drove the husband to abandon his lucrative business

and go where he could be with his family, and they with him. Had his wife been weak in her love he would not have been moved. The stronger her love was, the stronger his was compelled to be. Barth realistically concedes that man's love is hidden under 'the whole heap of mud and dross and rubble and ashes', but it is there! It survives 'the whole heap of mud and dross and rubble and ashes' and is not lost. God is love and does not have to fight within Himself any such handicap, but the beloved believer presses on to fulfil his love due to God; hence statements in both Old and New Testaments protesting that they—the writers and speakers—love God. If God's love were not great then man's love would be weak, but man strives to love no less than the God Who loves him.

Often I have counselled a wife to go home and love her husband with *agape*, and not with *eros*, and the effects have in some cases been startling. Surprised—and even amazed—by the change in his wife, the husband has wondered at the miracle which has happened, and suddenly discovers in his wife a treasure he could not believe could come to him. Generally it starts him on a personal quest for the same kind of love. I do not want to exaggerate the nature of the event—indeed, I could not. Whilst it has not always happened with every spouse I have counselled, it has occurred many times, and marriages have been renewed. Is it not, then, that the obligation to love has come to the loved one, and would the response dare be any less than that of the initiating lover?

Only this can explain the power of love, for power in it there certainly is. Take a man like Abraham or Moses—both called 'the friend of God'—or other men such as John and Peter and Paul, rugged Martin Luther, saintly John Calvin and the great preachers of the eighteenth century in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales; were not all of them great men of love? Have there not been countless women of love from the beginning of the human race until now? Has not love been the real power, the genuine, sincere power that has shaped the best we know in history? Not one of these persons named above boasted of his or her prowess in love. Indeed, they lamented the lack of it, seeing 'the whole heap of mud and dross and rubble and ashes' and not the love that

survived in spite of their fleshly humanity. Yet, at any point, all of these would have loudly protested their love for God. The persistence of their lives and their ministry in the face of enormous odds show us that 'the returns of love' (*agape*) are very powerful. The returns of human love (*eros*) might temporarily appear to be impressive, but time shows that such love leaves nothing. Fairly soon the egoism that underlies it is shown. Only love builds up, and what it builds is there forever. When the testing fire of love eventually goes through it as a judgement, only what love has done will remain, untouched by the fire, or—possibly—purged by it of its elements of dross, the fine gold remaining.

So then, we applaud the 'weakness' of love, for that is its true power. We promote love to the world as the only cure of its evils and its ills. Selfishness will build nothing in the ultimate, but love continually builds: even unseen it builds, and what it builds—under the aid and direction of the Creator—will be the Holy City. The gold that paves its streets or the jewels that encrust its gates are the wealth of love itself, and the reflection of the one God of whom John has said simply, 'He is love.' This is the true power, the true God.

## I AM NOT PROOF AGAINST YOUR LOVE

I am not proof against Your love,  
I am not strong against Your joy;  
Though I am strong against all else,  
And though my powers I may employ;  
I am not proof against Your love,  
Oh Father, Son, and Holy Dove.

I have not found my powers to be  
Strong when the Lord of Hosts draws near.  
His songs of love unsettle me,  
And all His hosts dispel my fear;  
I am not proof against the love  
Of Father, Son, and Holy Dove.

My citadel so long was locked,  
Lone, grim and firm upon its place,  
Until the Lord of Hosts encamped,  
And all my powers of sin laid waste.  
I proved not proof against the love  
Of Father, Son, and Holy Dove.

My gates were lifted up that day;  
My portals broke and opened wide;  
The King of glory and His hosts  
Flowed in for ever to abide—  
The glory of eternal love  
Of Father, Son, and Holy Dove.

I was not proof against that love;  
 The hands I saw were scarred with nails;  
 The eyes—that once were filled with pain—  
 Spoke love to me that never fails.  
 I gladly bowed to conquering love  
 Of Father, Son, and Holy Dove.

Ah You—the One Eternal Love!—  
 I thank You that You entrance made  
 Into this needy heart of mine  
 By grace, and by the price You paid.  
 And now I love You for Your love,  
 Dear Father, Son, and Holy Dove.

## LOVEFEST—ONE

IT IS well over thirty years since the first lovefest that I saw in my life. It happened in Pakistan, and it is as vivid in my mind as it was in the days when it transpired. Rightly enough, the first figure that comes to my mind is old Fazal Masih, the grizzled old Pakistani Christian who was the unspoken leader of the people who lived in the mission compound in Jacob Road, Hyderabad. His word was law for most who lived on the church campus, and although sometimes his motives—and even his actions—were not the best, he kept the place in order, and stood behind the pastor of the day.

Of course it was strange, arriving at the compound with our six children and settling into the missionary home that by that time had accumulated history as an old ship gathers barnacles to itself. One day that history may be written scrupulously by some conscientious historian, but much of it lies unrecorded, though you can gather bits and pieces of it from the Christian cemetery where you can see the names on the headstones of the graves—missionaries who refused to return to the countries of their birth. I can remember burying one of them who was well into her eighties, and who had been almost clothed with deity by the local folk who loved her—both Christian and non-Christian alike.

In those days there were Christian missionary compounds all over the Indian sub-continent, and most were fairly typical. Houses were built mainly of sun-baked bricks plastered with mud and painted inside and out. The walls were thick, insulating against the fierce heat of summer, and where we were—in Hyderabad of the Sindh—each had a shaft that went up through the roof to allow any hot air to be drawn out by the constant *loo*, the incessant wind that blew hot in the day as it passed across the desert, and reasonably cool in the night when the desert dropped, somewhat, its intolerable temperature.

The children were exhausted from the one thousand-mile trip down from the Himalaya hills, but they had been in the country for six months, had learned snatches of the *lingua franca*—Urdu—and could converse with the genial shopkeepers and stallholders in the market place, always known as ‘the bazaar’.

The vicar of the church on the compound was one of the most intelligent and capable men I have met in my life. As an interpreter of Urdu into English and English into Urdu he was brilliant. I doubt there ever was his equal. He was also a kindly man, organising us into good order, advising us, warning us of the cultural traps into which we could fall, and, on the whole, settling us into peace in our new home, the old mission house which had been divided into two—one part for his family and the other for ours.

He did not burden us immediately with the problems of the congregation. He simply suggested that I preach in English and he would translate into Urdu. Sometimes he would drop in phrases in the Punjabi language and even spice it with Gujerati and Sindhi words and phrases, but for the most part he interpreted purely.

I think he was the first of the local congregation to be startled by the message I was bringing. We would spend hours talking over the various sermons, and he responded personally in a lively manner. He had a passion for truth, and seemed to be astonished at the things I was saying. Unlike some interpreters, he translated faithfully, and did not mix his own ideas under cover of our ignorance of the language. In fact, I had acquired a reasonable grasp of Urdu and could tell he was communicating the teaching I was giving.

He had also arranged a series of meetings which took up eight days, the services being twice a day. He was delighted with the way in which people crowded into the church. He said it was unprecedented, even though the missionary before us was deeply beloved by all.

IT WAS at those meetings we saw the beginning of communal love—just the beginning. Gradually the pastor unfolded to me the fact that many families in the congregation had been involved in personal feuds for years. To the Muslim outsiders they presented

a solid face, a compact community which defended itself against the hostility which was inherent in that ancient faith—hostility by Muslims against all who were not Muslims. Within the Christian community the rifts were great, but to us who had come from another culture their divisions were undetectable.

To begin with, those who lived on the compound were always suspected of gaining advantages over those who did not. On the other hand, those who lived outside the compound had a certain courage in doing so. They had to learn to live with those in the community who were Muslims, Hindus and Parsees. Then there were other difficulties, namely the caste system, which although it was not supposed to exist within a Christian community still influenced the way Christians saw one another. Some converts had come from various Hindu castes, and kept the memory of being up the social scale from some of their brethren. It took a generation or more for those who had come into the Christian fold from Islam to be accepted by the congregation as genuine and not as calculating converts. These were some of the elements which caused social and communal rifts, and often spread their bitterness into the church services.

Of all this we were totally ignorant. It was a good thing that the Pakistani Christians knew us to be ignorant. Our words were not taken amiss, and they accepted my teaching as being unloaded with personal references to their situations.

Looking back, I can see how some elements of the faith must have seemed entirely new to them, and quite dynamic in leading them towards the fellowship and unity of love which the early church experienced with great power and delight. At the same time there was almost no exhortation in what I taught, and the pastor—Emmanuel Mall—appreciated the objectivity of the teaching. He thoroughly lost himself in communicating what seemed to be thrilling him as he spoke.

I was gratified and even amazed at the response which came to the doctrine given to the congregation. Comprehension seemed little less than miraculous, and it bred acceptance of the doctrine. There was a band of unmarried teachers who taught at the primary and secondary level Christian school. They were mostly young graduates from the north, and, like many of the congregation,

were Punjabis—an intelligent people who lived mostly in India and what was, in those days, West Pakistan. Many of these young women had been trained in schools taught by missionaries, and they had a warm pietism which was quite beautiful to see. They were gifted singers on the whole, and gave life to the congregation by their instruments and knowledge of the hymns and psalms of both the Punjabi and Urdu languages.

If I remember correctly, some forty members of the congregation came into a transforming experience of Christ, and something new began to grow in that congregation. Emmanuel was delighted beyond measure. We would spend hours a day discussing the truth of the Scriptures, which he insisted was a little less than marvellous, much of it being new even to him. This limited my time for learning Urdu, but it seemed not to matter much, and he insisted that we had not come just to learn language but to get the message of God's love out as quickly as possible through interpretation. I think he would have travelled with me all over the land, translating with enthusiasm and efficiency so that he could communicate every detail—something he knew a foreigner could rarely do.

Those meetings took place in the last weeks of 1957, and were really a preliminary preparation for what was to take place in March of the next year. At Christmas time we went with him into various villages of the Sindh province. Often we would go by bus, and sometimes by bicycle. Sometimes missionaries who were further out, but who had their headquarters in our compound, would take us to villages too difficult to contact other than by Landrover transport. For some reason the villagers took to us—that is, took us to themselves—and we felt the warmth of their acceptance.

Emmanuel had a great friend who was another pastor and who lived some distance from Hyderabad. His wife suffered from some mental illness and was a hindrance rather than a help to him, and he would leave her in other hands whilst he itinerated in his ministry. He became a good friend to us, and as he and Emmanuel were almost inseparable friends, life was good when the two came together. They both had a rich sense of fun, and punning was their forte. It happened to be a weakness of mine.

The second pastor—John Rawat—was fascinated by the teaching we shared in various meetings.

FOLLOWING the successful teaching series of meetings, we began —about half a dozen of us—to meet at five in the morning for prayer. Emmanuel had the March meetings in his sights, and we trusted special things might take place during them—though just what sort of things we were not sure. Laurel, my wife, would come with us whilst the children slept on. Morning after morning we prayed, and we noticed the number of our group begin to swell rapidly. Prior to the special meetings the number mounted to sixty. We decided to pray from the evening until dawn on the night prior to the special meetings. It happened that we prayed through until dawn on every night of the meetings. Something quite wonderful was in the air, and, of course, the expectancy was high.

The church was packed for all meetings, of which there were three every day. Villagers had made special arrangements and had come to doss down for the days of the teaching. It was simple enough to sleep out in the open at nights, for rain came only once a year, and often was not seen for years on end. Irrigation from the great Indus River brought life to orchards and farms and the markets of the desert cities. Somehow the visiting villagers were fed by their city friends, and so the meetings proceeded.

What was a new phenomenon was the comparative quietness of the children during the meetings. Generally they ran unchecked, shouting and playing and quarrelling, but in these meetings they seemed to be held supernaturally in a bond of quietness. It was true that mothers suckled their babies if they stirred, but for the most part there were few babies who cried. Both John and Emmanuel marked this as a sign that God was present in the midst of the people. They had dreaded the noise the children might make.

Perhaps it is the nights that I most remember. Prayer was not looked upon as a painful, drawn-out vigil. It was a time of great joy, of intermittent singing, and of intercession for those who attended, and those who did not. Then, as the teaching began to penetrate, a new note came into the praying. I well remember its rather curious nature. A kind of rhythm came into the personal

praying. I could generally follow the meaning of the prayers, but was surprised to hear personal confession to God, as though the ones praying were suppliants for forgiveness and mercy. Confessions of an intimate kind were made—of previous hatred towards some, of anger and division, and those who prayed cried as though their hearts were breaking, as though they could no longer tolerate failure to be reconciled. It was only later that Emmanuel and John explained to me that feuds were dissolving, family differences were being resolved, and harmony was beginning to come to the congregation.

Often Muslims—though few in number—would come into the afternoon and evening meetings. Wide-eyed, they watched Christians asking forgiveness of one another. Such pure humility and reconciliation of this kind would have been unknown to Islam. This kind of brokenness requires the truth and power of the Cross of Christ to take place. Forgiveness—even of one another—is conditional upon forgiveness first known at the Cross, and then given in genuine love, the *agape* of God. When forgiveness was asked, I saw Muslims begin to weep. They could not control their feelings; they were witnessing a phenomenon previously unknown to them.

As the meetings proceeded—the theme of which was light and darkness, love and hatred, pollution and cleansing—the love of God began to break through into lives. Even so, it was not unopposed. Whilst Fazal Masih on the one hand was impressed by what was happening, he also saw that the whole regime he had controlled was breaking apart. Some of his own family were wonderfully transformed, and could not bear past hatreds and divisions. Whilst he did not openly oppose what was going on, he was trying to cope with the changes, and his alert mind was planning for the future.

One member of the congregation had had a dream or a vision—he was not sure which it was—and he came to John, Emmanuel and me, and told us that two young men would come into the congregation and try to disturb the meetings. He did not know who they were. He could not see them in the dream. Sure enough, the next evening two young men walked up to the front and attempted to address the congregation, saying that the

unusual phenomena were not to be trusted, and with all due deference to our new missionary, this well-meaning foreigner was introducing elements that were not truly of the Pakistani Christian culture. The dream—or vision—had prepared Emmanuel, and he stood firmly in the chancel and rebuked the young men. He said that their very way of addressing the congregation was certainly not of their culture, but—even more—it was not of the Bible, nor of the early Christian pattern. He disposed of them very quickly.

ONE OF the Punjabi teachers came to me and said, 'For months I have had a running sore in one of my ears. I was extracting wax with a knitting needle when accidentally another teacher pushed against the needle and perforated the eardrum. The ear has been suppurating for months, and the hospital has been giving me some treatment. However, it never improved, but when you laid hands on me during these meetings—at my request—the ear healed overnight. I can hear with it now.'

She smiled gently, and said, '*Dawai se nehie, sirf dua se, mang thik ho gaie,*' that is, 'Not by medicine, but by prayer, I have been healed.' The words *dawai* and *dua* sound similar in Urdu. Hers was a mild punning.

A MUSLIM said he had been seeking God for years but could not find him in Islam, in spite of constant reading of the Koran, and faithfulness in his prayer. Out in the desert he had had a vision of great water flowing, bringing life to the desert and to him, and a voice told him it was the water of life, and he would receive this in the city of Hyderabad. He had walked into the church—an unusual thing for a Muslim to do—and he had heard of Christ as being the water of life. The message of the Cross affected him deeply, and now he knew a fountain of life's water was springing up within him.

ON THE last night of the meetings the pastors walked to the door to shake hands with the people as they left the church. Only a few folk did that, and even they hung around the door, as though anticipating something. I, who for years had dreamed and prayed and longed to see revival, had sensed God would do something

even more wonderful than the things we had witnessed. Each night there would be over one hundred people praying at midnight and no less than fifty when the day broke at dawn. I—with the other two pastors—was wondering what might happen.

Suddenly something happened. The whole congregation broke out in spontaneous singing. It was singing, yet singing like nothing I had ever heard. The songs were well known and were in both Urdu and Punjabi, and some even in Gujarati, but it was the beauty and the sweetness of the singing that was beyond description. Joy was flooding the whole congregation. Nothing was organised or led by the pastors or others.

After some of the songs, some members of the congregation would rise and embrace others with tears of joyful reconciliation. Occasionally someone would stand and read a passage of Scripture so that some promise or encouragement would come to all. As the passages were read they would seem to fit the occasion, and seem to be adding one to the other on the themes of love, forgiveness, cleansing, fellowship and unity.

The few folk who had gone out hurried back into the building and joined the others. The pastors had gone to the vestry and people came in and out of that room, being helped by their ministers, or bringing others with them to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour. The meeting which was supposed to complete the teaching series went on and on, through midnight, and until the morning. The congregation never seemed to weary. Here and there a person rose and went home, but on the whole no one wanted to miss what might happen next. Many stood before the congregation and shared what God had done in their lives over the months, and in particular, during the series of meetings, and even on that night.

Certainly love had come to the church—the pastors and the people. Folk demanded that the meetings continue, but the pastors were firm. There would be a late-afternoon meeting each day, but folk were to have their evening meal at home. After that, if meetings happened spontaneously, then they would be in order. What happened was that folk decided to meet in this home or that, and the pastors and I were called to minister to them.

Each night when we returned to the compound we could hear

folk singing in their own homes. We—my wife and I—would get out a hymn book and sing together, something we had not previously done. Music was in the air, singing kept wanting to express itself from the heart. Worship was as pure as I have ever known it anywhere. Teaching began to be the gift of some of the younger as well as the older men. Not long after that, we—as a family—had to return to the hills for the children's schooling and more language study for the parents. With reluctance we waved 'Good-bye' to the Christian crowd of people at the railway station. There were tears in their eyes and ours. We were headed to a cooler clime.

We kept trusting that the peace would hold within the congregation, and that folk would not revert to old divisions. It was a trust based on a wonderful work of God—the work of true *agape*.

## LOVEFEST—TWO

I HAVE recently gone back through letters sent to friends in mid-1958, and my memory has been awakened to events that happened quite closely together. They seemed remarkable to me then, and even more so now, at a distance in time of some thirty-one years. As a family we were for some months in the Murree Hills above Rawalpindi, up some 5,000 feet above sea level. These hills are very beautiful with their deeply wooded forests. Murree is an old hill-station where the British escaped from the hot plains, and where they enjoyed social life to the full. In a sense, missionaries followed this pattern, establishing a school for their children at nearby Jhiga Gali. Three of our children were pupils there.

The first part of what I have called 'Lovefest—Two' began with the informal weekly meetings of our own missionary society. Studies on the work of the Cross led to an experience of the inflowing of the Spirit of God in a quiet yet powerful way. So there was certainly love amongst us as a fellowship of missionaries. Those days remain memorable for their quiet love and their sharing, and the good family fun we had as parents and children, and also—as some were—unmarried missionaries.

It was at that time, in the Murree Union Church, I gave my first sermon in Urdu. It was Easter Day and I had written it out in Urdu—scared of failing—and then, when I was in the pulpit, I abandoned the notes and spoke from my heart, and was amazed at how the language came, even though my wife and I had only had a year's study of it. Later a university professor said, 'I leant back during the message and I closed my eyes and thought, "This is not a missionary but a Pakistani speaking."' Urdu has a beautiful lilt, a lovely cadence, and is an excellent language in which to speak spiritual truth.

At that time I had been asked to give Bible studies from John's

Gospel at the United Presbyterian Synod meetings. It was with some trepidation that I took them in Urdu, before one hundred and fifty missionaries and Pakistani pastors. Some of the national pastors said I had used words they had not heard before, but it was certainly not an ability of mine, but a special gift of grace at that time, as one does not achieve that kind of fluency in a year. It had the effect of touching missionaries and national brethren alike, and there certainly was much heart-searching, and some visible results. One Pakistani pastor was so deeply convicted of sin and neglect of his family that his life was transformed, and a week later some thirty-nine of a camp of fifty-five young leaders came into a rich experience of Christ through his renewed ministry.

The Synod meetings had revealed strong differences between personalities both foreign and national, and when the missionary society asked Pakistani pastors to join them for the first time in the long history of missionary annual meetings, it was feared some kind of disaster might happen. Partly through the Sialkot Convention meetings, partly because of the Synod meetings, and because for some time God had been working in the hearts of both missionaries and nationals, no such division came. Nationals naturally enough resented the missionary society planning the use of finances, managing the schools, hospitals and colleges, and the resentment went deeply. However, it was because of the working of the word of God and the Spirit, previously at the Convention and now at the Synod meetings, that one night a group gathered to pray so that differences could be healed, and all would become one in Christ. They prayed through until one in the morning, and so moved were they, as they melted before the Lord, and shared in loving forgiveness of one another, that they agreed to ask the Moderator of Synod if a Prayer Retreat could be arranged for national Synod members and missionaries. The Moderator gladly agreed, and it was to these meetings that the Reverend Gene Glassman and I were invited as leaders and speakers. Gene has proved to be a great linguist over many years, and nationals have always loved him as a genuine, caring brother.

It is against this background that what happened in those

meetings—what can rightly be called a *lofefest*—took place. One of the letters I later wrote had this to say:

From the very beginning God was working, and now, almost within a day, there was a real breaking down, weeping, confession of lives unfilled by His Spirit, of barren service, of lack of love, of harshness, coldness, cynicism, bitterness of spirit, disillusionment with their national brethren, and so on. But it was seen as sin, and clearly confessed.

The Pakistani pastors had watched amazed at the beginning of these things in the Convention, and later in the Synod, but now the Holy Spirit was doing something which was new to them, and they, too, were deeply affected. I can clearly remember Gene Glassman ministering at these devotional meetings, especially in our times of prayer. He is a man who stands out in my memory as strong but very gentle, and I saw tears flowing from his eyes as we sang a hymn which contained the verse,

Never was there kinder shepherd,  
Half so gentle, half so true.

Later he said to me, ‘I suddenly saw how true were Faber’s words, “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy, like the wideness of the sea”, and “for the love of God is broader than the measures of man’s mind”, and I saw Him as the gentle shepherd crying,

“Souls of men, why do you scatter  
Like a crowd of frightened sheep?  
Foolish hearts! why will you wander  
From a love so true and deep?”

‘Then I knew how hard my heart had been, hard against my national brethren, and in that moment I loved them in a way I had never known.’

As he had spent time in prayer and thought, prior to the series of meetings, God had melted his heart, giving him a tenderness he had not known before. Now, at the meetings, he was flooded with love and compassion, and an understanding of those of whom he had been critical. It was very beautiful to see this new, full *agape* in operation.

I had been asked to speak at these special meetings at the last moment, but had previously arranged to speak at a Bible School

for the Scottish Presbyterian Mission some twenty miles distant from our meetings at Gujranwala at the United Seminary. I would go off early to Daska in the morning, where I was asked to speak on the theme of Revival to the gathered pastors, evangelists, Bible-women and missionaries. I would return to the Prayer Retreat for the afternoon and evening meetings.

EVEN though I have the text of the letter concerning both sets of meetings before me, there are some things which I cannot remember; that is, I am not sure of the particular details as to what happened at Daska and what at Gujranwala; but there were similar happenings in both places. I have this very beautiful memory of missionaries breaking down and asking forgiveness of their national brethren, and likewise the Pakistani pastors—many of them—responded in the same manner.

The most outstanding memory is of a lady missionary, well known to everyone as an acerbic, straight-talking, no-nonsense and honest woman. I think most people—missionaries and nationals alike—admired her, though many were also scared of her, afraid ever to cross words in conversation or discussion. She had been thirty-five years on the field and seemed immensely devoted to her work.

I can see her now in a state of horror as she cried out, ‘I have never loved the Pakistanis. Not in thirty-five years have I ever loved one of them. I have only been critical and suspicious and cynical. Now I see I have been wrong. I am their sister in Christ, and they are my brethren, and I have never loved them.’

She was deeply shocked at herself. She did not doubt she was a Christian, but that made the whole matter just so much more terrible. She wondered how she could ever have gotten into the state of mind and the attitude that had become so fixed. She wept.

It was very beautiful to see her become a loving and tender woman, and also to see the affection the national brethren gave to her. Those hours were very holy ones.

THERE were, of course, both at Daska and Gujranwala, some who remained angry and resentful for past hurts, and later some disastrous things happened from this continuing enmity. Even

so, they had little effect on the meetings and fellowship at that time. The sheer joy of being one together was both liberating and exhilarating. Even those who still hid their resentments from the past could see the genuineness of the change in relationships and life.

It was in this area, during the early days of the century, that the well-known missionary John Hyde, later known as 'Praying Hyde', had, with his fellow missionaries of the Reformed Presbyterian Missionary Society, been used by God in great revival. At that time the church held its first Sialkot Convention meetings—patterned after the style of the Keswick Convention in England—and Hyde was one of the speakers. A man of prayer, he was in his tent at the time of one of the meetings, and they could not awaken him out of what seemed to be a trance. Finally they managed to tell him he was due to speak, and he walked to the edge of the great meeting-tent, and said nothing but 'Oh, Father!' three times, first in Urdu, then in English, and some folk began weeping, others fell to the ground in worship, and others cried out in wonder and joy. Out of that ministry began a revival that swept through that part of the Punjab, and it was to the children of that revival that Gene and I were speaking.

It was no wonder that old memories were awakened, and that the foundation of those earlier great men and women of faith and love had left a deposit of life in the Christian church which now was responsible for the response of faith and love.

ONE night at the Gujranwala meetings, I was seated, waiting for the audience to come. Our meeting room was soon packed. Then my eye caught sight of the man I would have regarded as the leading missionary in the United Presbyterian Church. A fine man, he had no cynicism or suspicion, but he was a ruthless realist. He sought to dominate no one, but none ever dared to oppose him or question his decisions, yet most felt that he was not warm enough to share fully his life with them. All knew the church owed a great debt to him, and the Seminary was where he taught most ably.

I looked down at him, and my heart sank. Whether it was my imagination or not, I will never know. I had once seen a leader at

our Hyderabad meetings, and his head and neck were set stiffly, and whilst he did not oppose the revival, he was most wary of it. So it seemed to me, this night, that this missionary who had—up to this point—not shown any opposition, might now begin to call a halt to the extraordinary things that were happening, such as his own missionary brethren weeping, asking forgiveness of their national brethren, and in return being asked forgiveness by those brethren.

I cannot say that he was a political man, but he certainly understood church politics, and they were rife in his own Synod and Seminary. I sensed he might see the national brethren using the revelations of the missionaries as fuel for future presbytery and Synod debates and lobbying. I visualised him standing up there—in that congregation—opposing the movement which we felt to be a genuine work of the word of God and the Spirit of Love.

In my mind I could hear him saying, 'Well, we thank God that He has worked in our midst, and brought us blessing, but now, aren't we going too far? Is not this weeping and confession going beyond its proper limits? Ought we not get to practical realities?' As I said, my heart had sunk, and I immediately determined to teach a message which would not be aimed directly at the missionary, but which would be loaded towards him, nevertheless. I knew I had enough ability to deliver that kind of message!

At that point it was as though the Holy Spirit tapped me on the shoulder. I had written a book entitled *Liberating Love*, in which I had written a chapter with the heading, 'You Can Love'. I knew that love is a matter of will, though not of our willpower but of His power. So it was as though the Spirit was saying to me, 'What's all this teaching of love which you have given? Now you are reacting—without love—against this man. Let us hear from you on the truth of love.'

I looked at the man again, and knew I should love him—whatever—since *agape* has no conditions for love. So I simply loved him. There was no other course to take, nor did I want to take any other course. It may have been my imagination that saw him soften and melt, and listen warmly to what was said: I do not know. I do know that he never uttered a word against the

reviving work of love that God was doing amongst us, and I heard later that he thoroughly approved of what was happening. He had wanted it, if possible, to go even further.

For myself it was a wonderful experience, just knowing that one can—in practice—love another. True love is a simple matter. Loving is extremely simple. The joy of those days at Sialkot and Gujranwala and Daska can still be savoured after thirty years of further ministry. The memory of the warmth and unity and genuine love is a rich one. Rich enough to cause one to pray time and again in these days, ‘Lord, send us all in these days a season of such love, for Your Holy Name’s sake. Amen.’

## LOVEFEST—THREE

**I** TRUST that one day I will be able to write a full account of things which led up to, and helped to precipitate, what I have called ‘Lovefest—Three’ but which has been termed by others ‘true revival’. Whatever the name for these events, I know what happened in the years of 1965 and 1966 in Pakistan was a genuine and wonderful work of God. It has indelibly left its imprint on many lives, and certainly on my own.

In 1965 a number of us from the Pakistan Bible Training Institute—of which I was the founder-principal—went on our yearly visit to the Rahim Yar Khan area, where we had ministered for quite some years. Some ten or more of our graduates were now pastors in that district, and all of them were competent shepherds of the flock. The missionaries who had taken over the area from the former Church Missionary Society jurisdiction were all exceptionally fine folk and dedicated to principles of encouraging the church to be indigenous, that is, not to be dependent upon finance from other countries, and to try to lead, govern and minister to their own people, especially those of the church.

In the early days the Christian folk of the area called their new missionary society ‘the *kutch* mission’, meaning ‘not a true society, but a green or immature one’. This was far from the case. The missionaries persisted, and gradually the church learned to raise its own finances, form its own schools, and pay its own pastors. Some of us missionaries had been going to this area to help, and especially to teach in the annual convention held there.

In the 1965 convention something strange happened. Indeed, unusual things had been happening throughout it, but in the last meeting some members in the congregation saw flashes of light come over the meeting, and some saw light shining from me. There were also some visions. I was preaching on the event recorded in Acts chapter 4 where the house in which believers were praying was shaken and the Holy Spirit fell on all who were

present. I felt a strange power in the preaching, and said that God could do that very thing with us in this very meeting.

We were under a large *shamiana*—a meeting-tent held up by tall poles. It sheltered us from the intense sunlight. We were in a compound bounded by the walls of two houses, and with two more walls which helped to form the protected courtyard. Outside the square the Christian cooks were preparing our next meal. At the end of my talk we sat and sang prayerfully a song in Hindi which pleaded with God to pour out His Spirit upon us. As we sang, something began to happen. The whole courtyard shook, as though an earthquake was happening. I have been in the heavy tremors of earthquakes, but this was different. I saw the *shamiana* poles sway, and felt the heaving of the ground.

My first thought was, 'I have been preaching too intensely!' Some missionaries told me they thought they had, perhaps, overdosed with tablets for influenza. All had immediate human explanations, but after a few moments we realised that what had happened in the Book of the Acts was happening to us. Many rose to their feet and cried happily, 'He is here! He is here! The Lord is here!' Others shouted, 'We have been filled with His Spirit!'

Outside, the cooks felt nothing, absolutely nothing. Missionaries living some hundreds of yards away felt nothing. I had the most tremendous sense of faith—as it were—almost becoming sight. Certainly there was the palpable presence of the Lord, and my life was greatly enriched. From that point onwards, quite unusual things began to happen to folk in the church, mainly womenfolk. Some months later, at a retreat for present and past students at our Bible Institute, the pastors told stories of dull Christians suddenly coming alive with the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Their whole community was changing.

Even so, the passing event of the shaking of the place did not provide what I increasingly felt I needed—a new power of love and spiritual fire in my life and ministry. I had talked with our third-year students, who itinerated in ministry, taking their tents and cooking gear with them. They had had many good times of ministry in which nominal Christians were converted and non-Christians, too, came to Christ. Talking to them, I suggested they

needed to be those who set off the fires of revival, rather than simply be evangelists in the modern mode.

They were gentle, respectful young men, and did not argue with me. One of them said, without animus, 'I suppose that if the father cannot light a fire then the sons will not be able to do so.'

What they said struck me deeply. They meant, of course, that I, being the father, could not fire them sufficiently to light the fire of revival. My own theology has always taught me that revival is a sovereign work of God, but that since revival is simply the church living at its true pitch—that is, in full life—then we should never be satisfied when it is not in full life.

At that time a missionary passed a comment on my students. 'I have never heard anyone preach *about* the Cross as they do,' he said. 'They are excellent. Yet I never heard one of them *preach* the Cross.' I understood what he meant. Both these things had troubled me, so that at a meeting that night our mission team were brought to acknowledge their dryness, and so to find something new in their lives.

One morning at chapel I suddenly burst into tears as I spoke. The students and staff looked concerned, and then I told them my feelings. 'Long ago, in Australia, I was sure that God promised us there would be revival in Pakistan. It is not long before we are going home, and as yet I have not known the love that I ought to have known. I have not lived in true love to you, and to others.'

The students were quite disturbed, and vigorously denied what I had said. One after another they began to tell me they had come to Christ through my teaching and ministry. I appreciated their concern, but told them that in one way that made things even worse, since I should have shown them—in my life—the great love which it was demanded I should live before all men.

Another day one of the staff came to chapel to share something very wonderful that had happened to him. He had had a revelation of God's love, and began to describe eagerly what it was—and is. As he proceeded, the men listened in silence. I know they were deeply moved, but that did not seem to him to be the case, and he, too, wept. 'I just don't have words to get it through,' he complained. 'If I could speak in English, and you could too, then I would get it through.'

One of the older students stood. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘we know what you are trying to say. Your Urdu is very good, and it is not that which is making it difficult for you to communicate. You would do no better in English, even if we could all speak English. What you have experienced is so vast and wonderful that you could not get it through in any language. If you could, then it would be as small as human language, and you have shown us today that it isn’t. It is too big to communicate in any language.’

THE missionaries at Hyderabad were a closely knit team, very affectionate, and working as one in ministry. One night as we gathered for worship I suddenly spoke of a discontent within my own being. It was not that ministry was proving ineffective: to the contrary, it was quite fruitful; but I had a dryness within me that longed for watering. One after another of the missionaries spoke of the same thing in their lives, much to the surprise of us all. We had all seemed to be going quite well. I think I longed for something such as I had felt at the Rahim Yar Khan convention, yet it was not feeling I sought, but the reality of Christ as the living Lord.

Next morning I was having my usual prayer-time, and suddenly a song began to come out of my mouth. As I sang—and I knew not what—I saw Christ hanging on the cross, and he had just died. Indeed, he was being taken down from the cross, and placed in the tomb. I saw the women looking down at him, with loving pity. Then it seemed to be the time between the Friday and the Sunday, and he lay still but his eyes were open, and he rested peacefully. It must have then been the morning of Easter, for suddenly he stood up, through the grave-cloths, and he was most regal, his royal being standing and looking over all history as its eternal Lord. I sensed that Lordship deeply, and longed that the vision should not pass. In fact, it all passed into me, much to my joy, and even as I write it is no less real to me than when I first saw it. I think his Lordship has never ceased to reside within me, and to be the ruling factor of my life.

Something then began to happen in the team of missionaries. There were strange visions, and sightings of Christ with the Scriptures in his hand, or he was looking down from the cross as

his blood fell, or he just appeared in shining glory. Then our worship came alive and very real. The dryness had passed away and there were new streams in what had been our deserts. I make no attempt to explain any of this, but know that new power came into my preaching.

I was able to convey something of this to our third-year students who were about to go to the Rahim Yar Khan area for ministry. A day or two afterwards, one of the students—Zakir—came to me quite excited. ‘We have been thinking of what you told us about lighting a fire,’ he said. ‘Last night I was sleeping when suddenly I was awakened, and the whole room was filled with light. I had a strange sense of fear and awe, and then I began to praise God. I woke one of the men, Edwin, but he saw nothing. I said, “Look! It is all light. The Lord is here!” After a time he saw the light, and then a film began to play before my eyes and I was praying for everyone in that film. You, Principal, were there, and the other missionaries. God promised He would pour out His Spirit upon us all.’

I WENT to the Sukkur area—some distance from Rahim Yar Khan—and we had some meetings with Hindus who had scarcely heard the gospel. One of their tribal members was a young man who had heard the gospel and responded. The priest was so angry he chained him in their little temple and would not let him talk to the villagers. Now, wonderfully enough, the priest brought his small flock to hear my studies. We sat out in the sun, when it was 120°F in the shade, and for days we talked the things of the Christian gospel. I talked about God being Father, and all men being His sons through the work of Christ and the Spirit. They seemed to understand well enough.

One night when they seemed restive, I prayed for a Hindu man who had an irritating cough—irritating to him and all of us—and as I prayed a black snake came out of him, and rushed away. The tribal secretary tried to catch it, but his hands went through it! After that the group of Hindus listened very well! The next day the new convert was going to tell them what had happened to him. As I began to give my last message the new convert went into a kind of trance, shaking and trembling all over. The Hindu

listeners were filled with fear until I told them it was not demonic, but was the action of the Spirit of God. The meeting finished and we went to lunch, by which time the Hindu convert recovered. He told me what had happened.

‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I saw Jesus on the cross, and I felt myself to be so evil, so full of sin and darkness, and I felt I was lost. Your voice disappeared, and I saw him smiling down at me, and, as he did, some drops of his blood fell on me, and—oh sir!—I was washed from tip to toe. I was made wonderfully clean and pure.’

When the meeting had ended, whilst the man was still in his trance of trembling, the leader of the Hindu group stood up and said the whole group had come to Christ, and after that were baptised in the river nearby. ‘Jesus the Son of God is now our Lord, and we give everything to him—our families, our crops, our stock.’

THESE sorts of things kept happening, and we knew something even greater was about to happen, and happen it did. I cannot here spend time on the build-up to those happenings, although I have good documents on it. In one sense, the fact that it happened does not really matter. The Holy Spirit—the Holy Wind—blows where he wills, and that is all that matters. The works of God are never ends in themselves. It is what is happening today that matters, even if one cannot understand the significance of that event. Even so, salvation history has its varied elements, and what happened at Rahim Yar Khan was one of those.

Chaman—a third-year student at the Bible Institute and a member of the team which had gone to Rahim Yar Khan—had to return to Hyderabad in order to talk with a pastor concerning his ministry commencing in the next year. We could also see something wonderful had happened, and we scarcely had to ask him what it was. He burst out with, ‘It has happened! Pentecost all over again!’

His descriptions poured out. The Holy Spirit had come upon many members of the Christian community, and the effects were spreading even to Muslims. But it was the strange and unusual events that were so wonderful. It had all started when one of the pastors was leading the singing and a hard, tight-lipped man

had refused to sing the song, which was ‘Jesus is standing, knocking at the door of your heart’. When asked why he did not sing, the man said savagely. ‘What is it all for? Show me Jesus and I will believe you.’

The pastor was horrified at what he thought was blasphemy, and suddenly it struck him that it was indeed true! Christ was standing there! He fell in awe at his feet, and with that the man jumped to his own feet and ran out. He had seen something when he looked at the pastor—and it was Christ. One writer described what happened: ‘The audience saw, in the atmosphere above the meeting, drizzling of blood drops.’

From then onwards was a stream of happenings, phenomena which often attend revivals. Given in what we would call supernatural happenings, and accepting these phenomena, the greatest of them all was the love which came upon the whole group. It was indescribable; it was the most notable thing of all.

ABOUT that time the Bible Institute closed as we had our Graduation Service. In all, there were about five hundred people in the meeting, as the local church was bidding us farewell officially. At the end of that service a very beautiful Urdu song began to well up within me, and I sang it. Perhaps it seemed endless to foreign ears, but the congregation followed it eagerly. I did not know what words were coming next—but they came! When it was finished there was scarcely a dry eye. Some of the folk rushed forward, asking me excitedly, ‘Where did you learn that song? Where did you get it? It is the sort of song that is like our old folk-songs—from a thousand years ago!’ Certainly it was a strange and beautiful song, like a saga of salvation, and a cavalcade of love. It affected us all. I only tell of it because something similar happened later, in the revival area further north.

Following our farewell I, my wife, and our three youngest children, travelled north west to Peshawar on the border of Afghanistan. Here we began meetings which suddenly grew in size and in the power of the Spirit. We went on into Afghanistan to Kabul, where we had meetings with the missionaries, and also had one of our rare seasons of sightseeing. My wife, Laurel, and our three children, made their way back to Hyderabad to get

ready for our departure to Australia. I went cross-country to Rahim Yar Khan.

I was only there for twenty-four hours, and in that time had four substantial meetings. I suppose well over one hundred folk came fully into new birth. Others had evident infillings of the Holy Spirit. There were exorcisms of evil spirits, healings and genuine miracles, but it was the times of prayer, fellowship and worship which were the most moving. The singing had a rhythm about it which can only be described as life-giving. The old sense of inferiority which had dogged many Pakistani Christians for generations was gone. A new joy of life, a new dignity and a new status of being, were apparent. I saw the old men who for years had always remained on the outside of the open-air meetings—smoking their hooker-pipes—now come forward, trembling to receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Giving to one another was also a rich feature, one man often providing meals for the whole community, whereas before he had provided only for his own self and family.

The last meeting was so memorable. It began at about five-thirty in the late afternoon and ended at eleven-thirty, and then only because I insisted on catching my train to Hyderabad! Such meetings were often continually interrupted by people being filled with the Spirit and crying out their praises. Many shook and trembled as the word of God and the Spirit spoke to them. Nobody thought of questioning the presence of the Lord! I taught the pastors to minister to the trembling and shaking ones, knowing that a conflict was going on within them. They were to lay on hands and assure the person that the Lord had accepted them, that He was with them. They could now be at peace.

This was what had happened, but on one occasion four of my students forgot what to do. A thin young girl of about twelve or fourteen years suddenly began to cry out endlessly at top pitch, 'Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!' So that I could be heard, the young men held her—the four of them. There was such power within her that she shook them off effortlessly, and continued her cries, until ministered to in a proper manner. All over the large audience there were cries of joy and adoration.

When I finished my address, which had gone on for at least a

couple of hours (nobody at all disturbed by that!), I was about to give the blessing when suddenly the song I had sung at Hyderabad, and whose words and lines I had forgotten, began afresh, of itself, so to speak. Again I did not know what the next words would be, but they came. Even more wonderfully than that, the whole crowd joined with me, and sang with me, and not one of them had heard it before.

It was then that I knew fully what Luke recorded when he said, 'They lifted their voices *together* to God,' and 'Now the company of those who believed *were of one heart and soul*, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.' It was then I knew the utter oneness of the unity of the Spirit, and sheer fullness of love—God's love.

After giving the blessing, I tried to make my way to the Landrover which was to take me to the local railway station. It was only about thirty yards away, but it took me a long, long time to reach it. Folk embraced me, many wept, and one man—who had known me only over those twenty-four hours—refused to let me go.

He cried out, 'Our brother must not leave us! I love him so!' When told I had to leave, nothing could console him. He lay on the ground and wept and wept. About a dozen men and women sought to comfort him. Others wept, but the nature of their love transcended mere human love, hysterical love, and that kind of sentimental human emotion. This was love that was truly Divine, flooding into, and through, the community.

I know I will never see love in quite the same light as I came to see it that night. I had seen it in the times recorded in these last two accounts, but it outshone even those. Now I had seen love as never before, and I realised how it bound the apostolic church together in strong ties. I saw how reprehensible it is, indeed, not to love—not to love in that way.

I can imagine many will try to analyse these last few pages and the events recorded in them, but one has to have been in that situation—or those situations—to understand fully the meaning of 'love is of God' and 'God is love'. I imagine that not until we see Him face to face will we fully understand. What I do know is that

that spiritual revival was surely a revival of love, a flooding into the heart of the Divine *agape*, without which nothing has any worth. Even now, as I think upon and speak of that wonderful night, the flame of love burns afresh, and burns strong, in my own heart.

## A LETTER ABOUT LOVE

**D**EAR HARRY,

Thank you for your long letter, received two days ago. It was good of you to write and tell me what you think of Christianity and the faith into which I have recently come. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and your natural wish that I do not get caught up in something which will later disappoint me, and even make me bitter. Nobody has spent more hours talking about the meaning of life than we have, and I have always been grateful for the various ideas you have given me, because generally they have been greatly helpful. Even so, as you know, none of them ever answered my deepest need or solved the primary problem which always confronted me, namely, 'What is life all about? Why am I here? What am I to do that is significant? What is my destiny?'

How many times we have gone on what you called 'the guilt track'! I would find myself, time and again, having a nameless dread, a sense of emptiness, a devastating anxiety, and utter hope-lessness about the future. You said you understood that, but had trained your conscience to obey your thoughts and act according to your philosophy of life; but sadly enough, I could never achieve that state of mind or life.

As you also know, I used to read quite widely, and so we talked about political idealism—especially about Marxian dialectical materialism—but ideologies never spoke to me. Nor did any form of philosophy. You were kind enough to show me the fallacies of different religions, and you were most strong about the weaknesses of the Christian religion. I remember you saying you had your fingers burned in that fire, and thought the Western version of Christianity the most dangerous of all religions. You

even warned me against the mix of religion, psychology and psychotherapy, and I am grateful for that.

Then came this amazing experience of what my friends call 'new birth'. I would never have believed it could happen to me, since I used to ridicule the idea of it. That was partly because of your clear rationalism, and my being brought up in an atheistic home. Even so, I had the problem on the one hand that you were still searching for truth and had not found it, and that our home—a reasonably happy pagan one—was never one for intimate relationships. Something seemed to keep us apart. I think I know now what it was.

I agree with what you say about some Christian preachers—that they get people under heavy guilt. You see, Harry, they didn't have to do this with me. I can scarcely remember when I was not already under it. Of course, the man I heard and who convinced me of the truth of the Christian faith was trying to get his hearers out from under guilt, and to do it authentically. The man didn't pull his punches at all. He didn't say much about sin, but he did confront us with the *fact* of it. Primarily he talked about the holiness of God, and the desirability of receiving this kind of holiness into ourselves, first by the purifying power of the truth, and then by being humble enough to receive the gift of that purity. I mustn't go all over that again, but how many times I have thought about it since my conversion!

No, Harry, what I want to do is to pick up a statement of yours and talk about it. You wrote, 'The weakness of Christianity is that it encourages extreme individualism if it is Protestant, and brings the free human spirit under authoritarian domination if it is Catholic.' I suppose you must have good reasons for saying that, but my experience has not convinced me that you are wholly right. I suppose your analysis must have some good grounds for your observations, but the church is really a mixed bag. The bottom line is that members of it are as faulty as those outside it, and that some of them really haven't a clue what the faith is all about. Leave them aside, as in one way they are not genuine believers, but go to the ones who have had the liberating experience of forgiveness and Divine love, and you meet another kind of person altogether. They are still as faulty as their nominal

brethren, still as faulty as those outside the church, but yet have a different spirit.

Harry, what struck me most forcibly was the fact that these people are very much persons. They are not highly individualistic as you claim. If I could coin a word, they are 'personalistic', yet not as you see members of a cult in that way. Reading the New Testament documents, especially the acts of the early church and the apostolic letters written to such churches, I have come across the idea, time and again, that 'we are members one of another'. The figure of this is the human body. Just as a body has members, so does the church. Indeed, that is what it really is—an intimate membership. It is not just the sort of thing you find in service clubs, or even the mateship we knew in the armed forces, but of a different character altogether. These people don't even *try* to be one together. They *are* one. They claim—and rightly, I am sure—that the driving power and intelligence of this body is Christ himself, but then Christ as the head, and so all significant leadership comes from him.

You will probably have that grin of yours on your face as you read this. You were always our theologian, and you are probably finding holes in my reasoning; but Harry, it is true! I know the intimacy of being a member of this body. It is a body which works in harmony. In fact it is a body which works in love. I think you once told me that Hegel says we only find ourselves in others, that we need all others in order to come to what we really are ourselves. Now, that idea comes pretty closely to the mark. I find my true being in the corporate togetherness of us all. Mind you, I don't *lose* myself in it, I *find* myself in it. That doesn't individualise me, but it does make me feel myself to be a full person. You see, Harry, people are filled with gifts and talents, and when they use these for themselves, then there is a sense in which they are egocentric, that is, selfish. When they are on the lookout for using their gifts for one another, love is freed in a wonderful manner. It is what you might call 'objective intimacy'. How is that for a phrase? So love is very practical, very relational, and always giving of a mutual kind.

What I am about to write now seems partly to contradict what I have said above, namely that I am no longer occupied in finding

myself. I think that was part of my trouble. I was concerned with myself and not others. I guess I even used you to help me get to my goal. I am certain I used others. I am sure that human love as we know it is very faulty, and it can bring deep disappointments, but to be loved by God is to believe He cares enough for us not to ignore us. That He gives up His best—His Son—is something that still leaves me stunned. So what I am saying is that when a person comes into contact with God he is at once not only in contact with Him but with his fellow-believers, and in a more general way, with all humanity. You remember Donne's statement about no man being an island in himself, that all are parts of a great continent. If I recall, you liked Donne and the other poets you called 'metaphysical'.

Now, to get back to my theme, and to try to explain why Christianity fascinates me, let me say that I have discovered something of the meaning of love. I know the word has been overplayed, but it has also been underplayed. I cannot tell you how excited I became when I suddenly discovered the truth of the Trinity—if that claim doesn't sound a bit high-flying. What I used to regard as an absurdity (I really understood it as pagan tritheism) suddenly turned out to be the most brilliant revelation I have ever heard, namely that the Three Persons never had any beginning, but have always been One, and One not in the mere arithmetical sense, but in the relational sense. I knew that two *coming* together could never be wholly one, since they are not essentially one, but suppose the Two were always innately one in the unity of love because they were, in fact, love, and then suppose that the Three were ever that way—why! that would give us a whole new understanding of relationships.

I keep seeing your faintly scornful grin, but, Harry, if you are genuine in your search for truth, then please listen to me. This Triune God—as the Christians came to call Him—was ever One, and in the following order—the Father was and is always love, the Son was and always is the Son of His (the Father's) love, and the Spirit is the Spirit of the love of the Father and of the Son of the Father's love. I know you can object, saying, 'Here again we have theological speculation,' and I think your objection would be valid; but listen, Harry, this God was always known as

One by the Israelites, and He came to them, not they to Him. He appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob with the matter of a covenant, and their history is really the action of God in their midst—objective historical happenings that reveal His nature, especially His love for them. Throughout the communications of the prophets you can find utterances which speak of a special Coming One, and that one Jesus claimed himself to be, as also to be the Son of the living God. With him, and aiding him in his incarnation, was the Holy Spirit. With the coming of Christ the drawn-out revelation of God comes to a climax. Now we know the Three are One.

Harry, this may not sound explosive to you, but it is to me. It means that in seeing the relationships of that Godhead, and knowing Man to be in His image, then the relationships of love that obtain in the Godhead must also obtain for Man. The Three Persons—as one—interrelate, serve, honour one another, and give to one another of their differentiations. This being so, I can see enormous hope for human relationships.

Harry, it is these relationships which I constantly study. I see that God has made Man one with Him via His Son and His Spirit, and via His own Fatherhood. In other words, He—as Love—is the source and inspiration of all the relationships of the faithful. As the Father is centred upon the Son, the Son upon the Father, and the Spirit upon both, as they upon him, so relationships following the new birth are of this order. Harry, I am now not centred upon myself, trying to work out my reason for being, and my destiny, but I am thinking in terms of others—all others. I admit it is a new experience, and often a painful one, but it is the thrust of my new life.

I wish you could personally share in the kind of worship we have, which really springs out of our relationship with God, and His with us—He being the initiator of relationships and worship. We seem to be organically one with God via Christ and the Spirit, and God is one with us. Thus I have a whole new social understanding of God, and a whole new social understanding of the human race. Harry, I find myself in relating to my brethren, and in their relating to me. They are very faulty, I am very faulty, and that is what makes our relationships so incredible. Do we

often fail? Oh, yes, we often fail. Yet the incredible thing is that we are never at ease when we fail. We want everything to be as it ought to be, and so forgiveness, reconciliation and continuing acceptance form a large part of our lives. By that I do not mean we keep having interaction about our failures. No, that is not the case, but we do highly value our organic oneness, our membership one of the other, and so we put away things which might disturb relationships, and find that grace frees us from foolish guilts, and keeps us walking in freedom.

Harry, I know you are going to find weaknesses in my arguments, and I am happy to discuss those, but the fact of experience, Harry, is what is so powerful, and so convincing. At least let your mind allow the possibility of God being love essentially, and of Man being made in that image of love. Allow the possibility that Man, being renewed, will now be motivated and constrained by Divine love to love as does God.

I hate to say this, Harry, but it has to be said: 'All this looks like nonsense until new birth comes. Then one sees differently, and one acts differently.' The Apostle John said, 'He that loves has been born of God and knows God. He that does not love does not know God, for God is love.' Harry, please, please think about it all, and do not write back immediately with your brilliant rationalisations of what I say, as though it were unreal or has no substance.

I look forward to your letter. Even more, I look forward to you taking the initiative and coming across the State to see me, and chat with me. At least you must know something has really happened to me, something that is too good to keep to myself.

With this true love, and sincerely,

*Arthur.*

## THE PERPETUAL PASSION

TERRY Hindmarsh is the most practical theologian I have met, and I have met a good number of them in my time. It was natural enough to meet him at a theological seminar where we had a visiting lecturer from North America—the US of A. We were both glad to meet, because we had been in Seminary together, and felt the need of each other in the years following graduation. As a matter of fact, we used to meet monthly on a Monday morning and we would yarn for a few hours, not only mulling over the difficulties we knew in our parish, in our marriages and families, but the new questions and insights that kept coming to us in pastoral ministry, or in the course of our reading. Both of us were avid readers, and I guess you could say 'perpetual thinkers'.

Until I met Terry at a chance theological seminar, I did not know what had caused our meetings to lapse. I would ring him as usual—that is, at odd times when I felt a need to communicate with him—and yet it seemed there was always something which somehow kept us apart. He was friendly enough, but the old compulsion to meet and share seemed to have evaporated. It was as though the friendship had waned, Terry being caught up in other things. I began to use the time to have interviews with folk who seemed to need them immediately after my Sunday preaching. Then a wall of silence was obviously present. Neither of us rang the other. We had quietly agreed to go ahead in our lives without each other. Occasionally we would bump into one another at denominational occasions—such as the meeting of Synod—but the old comradeship was gone. I was more puzzled than I was angry about it, and then learned to accept the fact that our friendship had died.

Over a cup of tea during a break in the visiting theologian's seminars, we chatted briefly. Terry said he would like to come and see me—next Monday if possible—and although I knew I had arranged an interview, I was sure I could change that date. Having fixed the appointment, we began to chat about the speaker. We liked his teaching, which was along the lines of Trinitarian doctrine—a theme which was beginning to show itself afresh in some contemporary writers. Terry and I were intrigued about that, and also a bit excited. For the moment—we told each other—we were sparing our congregations from our present enthusiasms, but both of us knew we would sooner or later bring it to them in practical terms, and terms of human practice.

WHEN we came together the following Monday, Terry took the initiative. 'I owe you an explanation,' he said. 'I want to tell you how the Monday meetings lapsed.'

There are two Jason rockers in my study, and we had made ourselves comfortable. Jane, my wife, had brought us cups of tea and her special small sultana-cakes, and so we revelled in both. We also revelled in the fact that our old friendship was as strong as ever. After a time of silence, Terry began his explanation of why it had temporarily lapsed.

I knew he had shame for something which had happened. At first he looked into his cup of tea, and then directly at me. 'Tony,' he said, 'I just got caught in perpetual passion.' He saw my look of puzzlement and said, 'I just fell into idolatry.'

I know what idolatry is. Sometimes we are into it before we realise. Other times we foolishly flirt with it, and get our fingers burned. Mostly we are just fighting it in its changing forms and modes. As for falling into idolatry—good and proper—I had not thought that it would ever happen to me, and even less that Terry would go that way. We both knew the biblical teaching regarding idolatry, and that should have shocked the socks off us, and warned us forever from being caught in it. I, for one, had written a book about it, and warnings about falling into idolatry were part of our preaching exhortations.

'It was a simple matter,' Terry said. 'It all began with a budgie.'

I stared at him. I wondered how a budgie could entice anyone into idolatry.

He grinned. 'Ever had a hobby?' he asked.

Of course I had had a hobby; many, in fact. I still did not get his point. 'I once got hooked on cabinet-making,' I said.

'Cost you much?' he asked.

I nodded. 'At the beginning it was a cheap hobby,' I said. 'I took to making cedar cabinets, and also to restoring old ones I found cheaply in odd places.'

'Did it go on for long?' he asked.

'For a fair while,' I said, 'but after a time I tired of it.'

He then said, 'So it wasn't very costly?'

I told him it had actually turned out to be quite expensive. It had not been costly in the beginning because I had used hand tools. Then Jane had given me an electric drill for my birthday, and a sander for Christmas. The electric tools spoiled me for much hand labour and so I bought an electric jigsaw. Yes—along with other things—it had cost me a fair bit. I had built up quite an array of labour-saving equipment. If one could talk about having a hobby, then maybe it was just the accumulating of tools. Now I scarcely used them, and sometimes I would have a stab of guilt for the money sewn up in them.

'What happened to your cabinet-making?' he asked.

'Don't know,' I said. 'I think I tired of it. I gave up trying to find old cedar furniture to restore. French polishing takes a long time, even with an electric buffer. I guess I just had more things to do with Jane and the family; and, of course, there was the parish work.' I wondered where Terry's questions were leading us.

'So then, your hobby wasn't just a time-waster,' Terry grinned. Then he asked, 'Did you get a great kick out of making a cabinet? Was it a thrill when it was finished?'

'My problem is that I am not a good cabinet-maker,' I said. 'I know how to fill up the holes and make the final french-polish coat shine like glass, but I feel a bit uneasy about it all.'

Terry said, 'You must have had some idolatry that really gripped you.'

'Oh,' I said, 'I've long ago worked out my besetting idol. It is

theology. With it goes building up my library. All legitimate of course, but you get to be the object of your books, instead of them just being helpful objects to use.'

Terry agreed. All theological people have a thing about libraries. I have often wondered how the apostolic church got on without them, and then I remember that Paul, being in prison, told someone to bring 'the books and above all the parchments', whilst he himself, even if unwittingly, was building up the Christian treasury of literature.

When we had eaten all Jane's cakes, and finished the pot of tea, Terry began the story of his idolatry.

'AS I SAID, it all began with a budgie. When I was a boy I was fascinated by this little parakeet. I was given a pair for my seventh birthday, and they were in a breeding cage. In fact, they had begun to lay their first batch of eggs. You could peep into the nesting box if you were careful in sliding forward the lid. Soon the babies began to hatch. They were ugly little beggars at first, but as they feathered I thought they were the most delightful of all pets. A young, fully feathered bird is a delight to behold. It is smooth, soft to handle, and if well bred has quite noble lines. One of the things is to care for it, and get it to that pitch where it is fit to be entered for a budgie show. Even if you never intend to show it, an image of the perfect budgie settles itself in your mind, and you can never rest content until the birds you breed come near to it. Underneath you are always hoping to produce the perfect specimen. The idea haunts you day and night.

'As a boy I became a member of the Budgerigar Society, and I even won prizes. Then I matriculated, went to Uni, and sold the birds I had, to get money for books in my reading lists. I thought breeding birds was something you naturally grow out of.'

He grinned a trifle ruefully. 'I really believed that, until one day someone in our present church gave me an expensive prize budgie. The person was selling out his flock, and he thought I might like it. It had been his favourite bird, and he kept it in a cage in the living room, and would take it with him everywhere, even to his aviary and the breeding shed where pairs were mated and bred and their progeny selected and groomed for shows.

'I liked the bird. In fact, I liked it so much that I paid a good price to get a female mate for it. Then I went up to our toolshed and built a breeding cage for the pair. They produced extraordinary progeny—every one of them a born show-bird. In fact three of them won prizes in their special class, and I just couldn't sell them off. I bought in other prize-class birds, and began what they call "line-breeding". You have to be in the know if you are going to do this thing. So I studied genetics, spent a lot of time keeping statistics of the breeding, and really became hooked on it all. Helen didn't like the hobby taking up so much time, but she certainly liked the birds and the fact that they won prizes; but after a while she told me they were becoming an obsession. The children would come and look at them and admire them, but then I scarcely related to the children in any other way. Helen was right, of course—about the obsession bit—and I felt strained when I spent time with them, but I just couldn't give them up.'

He stared at me for a time, and then said, 'You won't believe it, but I did give them up. I began to do it when I was given a pair of Turquoises. This species is a beautiful, small Australian parrot of iridescent turquoise colour, and when you have seen one you will know why a budgie ceases to grip you. You want to have an aviary of these small parrots. I sold off my surplus of non-showable birds and began to breed the "Turks"—as the fanciers call them.

'If breeding budgies was a hobby out of control, then breeding parrots became what Paul called "inordinate affection". In short, it became an idolatry. I didn't think that of course, or I might have tried to do something about it. Tony, you won't believe how an idolatry can grip you. I just went crazy. As you know, we have little money—only just a comfortable income. I happened to have sold my budgies at a good price, and so I was cashed up enough to buy quite a few parrots. I won't bore you with their names and species. I never once invited you to see them. I guessed you wouldn't have approved. They were the primary reason I dropped our Monday get-togethers. I dropped other things also that had seemed like good imperatives in my life.

'If I had had the image of a perfect budgie in the mind, now I

had images of the perfect Princess parrot, the perfect Superb, the perfect Rosella—and so on. I would go to garage sales and buy aviary wire, steel frames, and whatnot. I would go on trips to ferret out hollow logs for nesting, or I would have the work-shed piled high with particle-board boxes for nests. Much of this exasperated Helen, but the children loved the birds, especially the ones that talked or carried on with their silly antics, as, for example, Corellas do. That helped, but Helen knew there was something wrong.

‘As for me, I would have my Saturday-night struggle when I would banish every thought of parrots and building and delicate young chicks in order to concentrate on the sermons for next day. It was always a kind of catharsis, and would be painful. I would have the same battle if I were asked to lead studies during the week, and of course my own weekly study with a house-group. I was grateful to grace and the power of concentration which would take me back into the flow of the truth. For that time I would be dead to my hobby, but even as I came down from the pulpit to shake hands with people at the door, the sight of the aviaries would drift back into my mind. I would scarcely relate to the congregation.

‘Things were going terribly wrong and I scarcely knew it. The intimacy that Helen and I had had waned considerably. I could not get my thoughts on to her. They just seemed to be elsewhere; not on other women of course, but mainly on what I called my hobby.’

WHILE Terry had been talking, I was measuring my own life by his. Memories kept coming of similar episodes in my life. Maybe they seemed minimal, comparing them with the absorption Terry had known, but they were real enough. I knew that each episode fed my ego, and gave me a strange sense of illicit pleasure. My library had been one of these things until I gave it over to God one night in a welter of tears, and felt strangely purified. God—for His part—did nothing about taking the library away, but He had purged the deadly idolatry of it.

‘Terry,’ I said, ‘aren’t we going in and out of idolatries all the time? Don’t we get to a point where we recognise the signs, and then stop, and get rid of our idol?’

He sighed. ‘I guess you are right, but to believe this will be habitual and that we cannot escape idolatrous episodes, and that they *have* to be part of our living, is disastrous thinking.’ I saw the sadness in his eyes, and then they brightened. ‘Just imagine, Tony, that we could be free of idolatry forever. You know—once-for-all.’

When I nodded, he went on rapidly. ‘Idolatry does not remain with the object we worship. It spreads to all other things, fouling them up. The idol wants to possess all we have and are. The prophets knew this, and they preached the wrath of God on idolaters and the idols. Tony, you know the invectives they used, the taunts they uttered against the idols, and the way in which they showed that the idolater becomes like his idol.

‘One day we had a young man come to our church to preach. He had been recently ordained, and so you might say he was raw. He was that, all right, but it was not really rawness. It was incredible fire. All the time he was preaching I was remembering when we were young, and the passion we had, to see men and women transformed by the gospel. I was utterly in shame as I listened to him. I kept thinking of Jeremiah and his pain, and his tears for his people, and his frantic sorrow at their wounds. I realised that the fire this man had in his bones was the fire I had in mine for my so-called hobby—right at that very moment—but I had no fire in my preaching. I could see that fire comes out of, or even that it *is*, great love. I listened in shame but also in honest envy. I was sitting with Helen, and for the first time in a long while I held her hand. I think she took heart from that.

‘When the young man came down from the pulpit I saw the look on his face that you and I had known in the old days, and I honoured him. I whispered to Helen, “And Jeremiah went back to his budgies.” Helen picked up the thought immediately and she gave a bit of a giggle and a squeeze to my hand, and we both knew the idolatry was finished. We knew it together that night as our old love flooded back.

‘I didn’t go out the next day and dismantle the aviaries and let the parrots fly away. I just made provision for their sale, and the selling of the aviaries and all the equipment. We set aside a sum for the clothes the children badly needed, the repairs for Helen’s

car, and the rest we gave to World Vision. And that was that.'

TERRY and I sat there, silent and thinking. Finally I said, '*Eros* is lusty, and *agape* is not. *Eros* rushes its goals, and *agape* quietly accomplishes its end. It is always looking to that end, and working for it.'

'Of course,' Terry said, with a note of surprise in his voice. 'When you come to think, it has to be that way. All the things that are scaffolding to its building work are taken away. We often mistake the scaffolding for the reality, the aids for the building itself. Only love builds; only *agape* can build.'

'Terry,' I said, 'I want to go back over this idolatry business. I don't want to lose anything you've learned. Tell me: do you think *eros* is *agape* gone bad? The apostle John said, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever." As you know, John uses the verb *agapao* here, so he means you have *agape* for the world, but then the *agape* of the Father is not in you.'

'That's right,' Terry said with sudden interest. 'Those of us who are theologians, and follow theologians like Barth and Nygren in their use of *eros* and *agape*, say that *eros* comes out of our humanity, and *agape* out of God—and from nowhere else.'

'So *eros* is the drive that comes from being in the image of God, and that is the compulsion to love, yet not as God loves—in purity and goodness—but in obtaining self-pleasure.'

Terry showed some excitement. The magic of our old Mondays was coming back to us both. 'In the beginning you can have *agape* for parrots, or any other thing, and you feel a freedom because you are loving, and you are loving lustily. You get stimulation and delight from it all, but if it becomes idolatry, then you have changed pure love into selfish love, which is, of course, *eros*.' He paused.

'This perpetual passion in man is what fascinates him, infatuates him, and all the time he is telling his idol to give him what

God alone can give—the great 'I-thou' experience that Martin Buber talks about, the moment when you and God are one, and when you and another are one.

'And his idol cannot give it to him. The man makes the idol to be his God, and escapes the demands the true God would make. He controls his idol by his *eros*, and expects back much more than he gives, or—at the very least—what he gives.'

'He gives nothing,' I said. 'He just gives to get. He likes the adoration he conjures up. It is *his*. It is really to himself, via the idol. Then, because it all originated in him, it expends itself. It is false. The idol wins. It is the medium of the man's ego and returns nothing. But it keeps on making demands.'

'I'm glad we have talked,' Terry said. 'I can see now that man has a perpetual passion, being made in the image of God, but the passion is holy, and never a lust. To know God is to love Him, and in the loving, the knowing continues and grows and flourishes.' He looked at me, shaking his head with a kind of surprise and dismay. 'How the idols suck us in!' he said. 'And yet it is we who devise them. In the ultimate, they are unreal.'

'When we were in Pakistan,' I said, 'we went one day to a village. It had been a Hindu village, but the tribe had converted to Christianity. One man who worked leather for his trade used to sit under a tall willow tree as he made sandals and belts, and at the top of one of the branches was his old idol. He had stuck it up there, tying it on. The hot wind known as "the *loo*" used to blow day and night, and the idol was tossed to and fro, backwards to upwards, with the blowing of the wind.'

'We wondered whether he was still hanging on to his idol. We asked him why he kept it, since all converts burned their idols.'

'"Oh, sahib," he said, "I have him up there because he looks silly. I want people to see how stupid and helpless he is. You might say it is my revenge for his tricking me and my ancestors for hundreds of generations."'

'How ingenious!' Terry exclaimed. 'Revenge on the idol! I have never thought of that.'

'And don't think about it,' I said. 'The idols dissolve when *agape* destroys them. The living God appears, and we know we

have love in His, and we don't want the illicit, tempestuous lust of *eros*.'

Terry stared intensely at me, nodding all the time. We sat there, ruminating over the morning's conversation, and the utter deceit of idols as against the plain, healthy truth of the living God. I kept thinking of God's anger against Israel's gods and idols, and the violation of His being that such idolatry brought—and brings. I guess Terry was thinking the same, because when we were parting he shook my hand strongly, and kept nodding his strength from the revelation we had shared.

Jane said, after he had gone, 'He is certainly changed. Better than ever before. Helen must be pretty glad.'

'Pretty glad!' I echoed. We stood there, hand in hand, watching his retreating figure, and everywhere around us and in us and between us was the Divine *agape*. And we were pretty glad ourselves.

## THE HEALING JUDGEMENTS

We have not been knowing the voice of the Father,  
We have not been hearing the voice of His pain,  
We have not been knowing the heart of His loving;  
Our own have been sinning—yes—time and again.

Long have we persisted in ways of rebellion;  
Unnaturally pressed in the ways of our loves—  
The love of our idols and love of our pleasures—  
Ignoring the grace that flows full from above.

The work of the Cross is as nought in our thinking,  
The plan to redeem but a trifling thing,  
'Tis worship we worship, but not in the Spirit,  
'Tis love that we love, but not Him who is King.

Our hearts are so barren though we have such riches,  
Our riches are rags—not the raiment we claim—  
Our spirits are naked, yet flaunt we our hardness;  
Our wounds are so deep, but we say there's no pain.

His judgements that come are the judgements of mercy—  
The droughts and the famines the gifts of our God—  
The pain that we feel is to heal us from evil;  
The scourge in our spirits the blessing of God.

The judgements of God now release us from judgements,  
The death of our dying to bring us to life;  
The pain of our idols will drive us to Jesus,  
To cry in the days and to weep in the nights.

There's balm in the fountain of Calvary's Gilead,  
 There's healing from pain in the Cross of His love,  
 There's pardon that heals us, and purifies wholly,  
 There's peace for the conscience which comes from above.

The Father has healed from the wounds of our sinning,  
 Has clothed us with beauty—all brought by the Dove—  
 The judgements are finished, 'tis joy until glory,  
 'Tis grace upon grace, and is love upon love.

## SINGULAR LOVE

‘IT IS not good for man to be alone’ was said of the first man, who was as yet without his companion, the woman. Often translated, ‘It is not good for a man to be lonely,’ the translation is wrong. One can feel lonely. In one sense, not having a partner in marriage does not mean a so-called single person is necessarily lonely. It does not mean, either, that married persons are necessarily not lonely. ‘Single person’ is in one sense what we all are, and in another sense it is not what we necessarily need to be. Examples of ‘single persons’—taken from varying angles—are orphans, unwanted and abandoned children, unmarried men or women, divorced persons, widows, widowers, persons under forms of terrorism, persons with infectious diseases, displaced persons; and so on.

I KNEW a man whom I will call Simon Traill—a person who never married—and he was a very companionable person. I was a much older man, but felt pleasure in his company. I never sensed anything missing in his make-up, and certainly saw nothing homosexual about him. He mixed well with both men and women. He was a generous person, without making much of his goodness. In fact, only those who were helped by him knew of his generosity. I doubt whether it seemed large in his eyes. I know he once had a relationship with a mere slip of a girl—he was older than she—but it came to nothing.

Looking back over his life, I am sure he befriended more than the usual number most of us make to be friends. When he lost touch with a person he would often try to regain contact, even many years afterwards, and when he did, folk found themselves to be one with him, as though the relationship had never changed.

Assessing his life, I suppose I would now call him a fatherly person. He fathered all kinds of people, generally those younger

than himself. I am sure he would constitute a great study for someone analysing him psychologically. As a matter of fact, the time came when this is just what people did. They grew suspicious of his fathering, putting it down to something unsavoury. Even so, he still kept fathering boys and young men who did not always have warm relationships with their own fathers. Sometimes fathers were missing from the home, if not through divorce, then through their busy lives in commerce or their professions.

Often he would seem to be a brother to young men and women, and even older men and women, for that matter. I think he could be said to have been a son to some older folk, who greatly desired to be as a mother or father to him. In all of these relationships I doubt whether he was ever conscious of his relational connections, or—if you like—his various roles in the family of Man.

I CAN see that a person who is unmarried is often suspect in the eyes of those who are married. For some reason—strange or otherwise—we want every person to be married. That I can understand: it seems ‘normal’ for persons to be married. I know of fine young men who are constantly harried by their friends—and enemies—to get married. If a woman is beautiful, intelligent and companionable, then it is almost a crime that she is not married. ‘Where are the men?’ we cry, as though some person or persons have been cruel, or lazy, or reluctant. ‘A beautiful woman must not go through life without a husband!’ We do not always see it this way with a woman who looks plain or a man who is ugly. It disturbs some onlookers when a beautiful woman marries a man who seems without looks or personality. Likewise a handsome man who marries a mousy-looking female is thought to be missing in intelligence. So much for looking on the outward appearances of men and women: it is the inward look that true love has, and it sees the excellencies of the one beloved.

But to come back to our point: people think each man and woman should be married, and that there is something like bad luck that they are not, or there is something suspicious about them that they are not wedded. It never seems to strike some critics that the person under scrutiny may enjoy *not* being

married, and may even see it as his or her vocation in life, just as many married folk see marriage as their primary vocation. There are those who are spoken of as ‘career persons’ and are criticised for that. No one seems to criticise a man if he is a career person, although they will often criticise a woman who is in that role. Of course, we constitute ourselves judges of others: that is a favourite human role.

I CANNOT help being a theologian. I know everyone is a theologian—in some way or another. I like to think I have given much of my life to theology, and of course posterity will judge me on this score. It may well turn out to be that I am a theological dud. I might even achieve faint praise as a theologian, but—that being what it may—I cannot go against my conscience, my conscience which I have tried, like Paul, to train to be ‘clear of offence before God and man’. Of course, I have failed many times, but my theological conscience tells me that no person in this world is a single person. He may well be one amongst many, but really he—or she—is one in the midst of many. If we are lonely it is because—in effect—we have chosen to be one who is not in the midst of many, but even against the many.

I do not deny that often society will shun a certain person for its own particular reasons. Perhaps some of the reasons are viable; perhaps not. Even so, a person can claim at any particular moment that he does not have to be cast off of God, and that somewhere there are those who will understand him and be one with him. He can be a person who is at one with himself, and so is not unduly troubled when others reject him.

All of this leads me back to my younger friend, Simon Trill. As far as I know, he has generally done good to all men and women. I am sure he must have failed many times, as we all do, but I am also sure his intentions have always been good. His natural desire to be a father to some, a brother or a son to others, and a friend to all, has brought him into deep trouble. It is better not to try to analyse why certain people set themselves against him. Perhaps it was the integrity of his character which confronted them. Maybe it was that they thought he was too good to be true, to be really genuine. They might have reacted against

his quiet generosity and read motives into his acts which were not actually present. I do not know, and have long ago given up thinking about those things.

I must admit my wife and I were often busy trying to marry him off. We, too, were among a multitude with the same idea. At one stage I spent hours and hours trying to get back to causes for his state of non-marriage. Now I chuckle at those efforts, even though they seemed noble at the time. The old marriage application forms issued by the Registrar of Marriages had a category that had to be filled by the applicants, that is, 'bachelor' or 'spinster'. Now it is 'not previously validly married'. Thus the Registrar—blessed be his name!—has disposed of bachelors and spinsters. There are none! There are just 'persons not previously validly married'.

Simon is not a bachelor: this is true. Mary Jones, unmarried, is not a spinster. There is no such thing as an 'old maid' and John Doe is not just 'a crusty old bachelor'. Indeed, they are—like everyone else—persons living amongst other persons, and that is where we ought to leave them, where we ought to allow them to be.

I have watched Simon in his life, and I remember the terrible time that happened when the rumour was put around that he was homosexual. He was at first bewildered by it, and then deeply hurt. He watched good friends withdraw, and others relate to him cautiously. Far from driving him into the camp of homosexuals, he refused to budge from his work and relationships. As I said, I refuse, even now, to examine the motives and urges of others who bore down upon him in his suffering.

Some said kindly, 'Oh, Simon is not a practising homosexual.' They thought they were saying a good thing about him and for him.

He said to me, 'I suppose I am also not a practising thief, a practising rapist, and a practising murderer, since I do none of these things.'

Their argument was fatuous. It was no credit to those of us who were his friends and stood by him. We would phone him or write, or contact him, and just share our love. We could pray against the calumny, but we could not dissolve it. Simon had long before learned that any self-justifying action confirms the suspicions and accusations of the critics.

The suffering Simon had

did not develop any martyr spirit in him, but often he was depressed, and I think there is always something of anger when this happens. One is frustrated when one cannot reply. What Simon could not do was cease to be a friend, a brother, a son, and a father. Somehow he struggled to carry out these relationships, and his persistence succeeded. Gradually the community seemed to forget the accusations, and they seemed to wither away. He was asked back into certain situations to share with others. It seemed his refusal to fight his accusers had taught some of them—and others—a lesson they needed to learn, and that is that single persons are not necessarily queer, abnormal, subnormal, or deficient sexually.

Many of his friends watched with delight his progress in social living, in his teaching, in his silent generosity. He just went from strength to strength. He gave himself tirelessly to teaching, and that meant for him much research, many hours of absorbing materials before he could pass them on to others. If he reads this account I am giving, he may not even recognise himself. What was gradually building up was a stream of young people—and even not-so-young people—who had come into faith, and who were being built up in it. At one stage they started to go on to the street to contact young men and women who never went near a church, and who had no time for what they called 'religion'.

Simon's home has always been 'given to much hospitality'. He has ministered to folk caught up in drugs and alcohol. His generosity has often seemed to some of us to be foolishness, but the loss of money has been no loss to him. One could go on building work upon work upon work, but that is not the point of this story. It is simply to show that his years have had a steady continuity of love to others, and have produced a rich harvest, a very rich harvest.

The main point is that Simon is what people call 'a single person'. He is not single any more than any of us is single. He is one with the whole living membership of Christ's community. Like us all, he is part of that living, organic unity, because love—

true *agape*—is always going out to others. It is opening up to others and relating to them fully, as do the Persons of the Triune Godhead—giving, honouring and serving, whilst at the same time receiving with grace, and using what is given for yet others.

Someone said to him recently, as they watched young people telling of what had happened in their lives and the directions in which they were now going, ‘This must be a very proud moment for you.’ The person who said that was one of his former accusers. So Simon just nodded quietly and gratefully. It is no mere truism to say that God vindicates His own. It is not always that it happens whilst the person is alive. In Simon’s case it has.

IT WOULD be comparatively easy for me to vindicate what people have called ‘the single state’. One could say that Jesus was the greatest of men, and will ultimately have achieved the greatest fruitfulness of any human being. Those who are theologically alert will say that he is married. He is the Lamb of the Bride. All of this is true, but then it is also true that all in Christ are married to the Lamb, all so-called single persons included. This is good biblical teaching and not just a clever saying.

I could take people who have never married—the whole long succession of them—and say that these achieved fullness of life without being married, and this could well be true. But that would be to try to justify the single state, as though it were innately deficient, but its shortcomings can be made up by good service. Wrong: what matters most in life is vocation. Vocation is the calling that God has for each of us in His age-long plan, the plan that will bring the human race to glory and a sociality that will no longer be related to present sexuality as we know it. It will be a sociality which does not draw the distinctions we presently draw. Paul talked about a calling to married life, and a calling to be single. This is not a crumb of comfort thrown to the single ones, but the heart of what it is to live in this world according to the will of God.

I feel repulsed by preachers who call upon single persons to lay a possible marriage on the altar and sacrifice it to God. They ask young women to stop thinking of having babies, and men of being fathers. This is a distortion of calling. Living life as a single

person may well be a vocation, and at times it may be visited with tears, and such tears are not sinful. It is only that God sees the end from the beginning, and He comforts us with His presence when the gifts of sexuality He has given press in upon us and our longings. There are many longings we have—whether single or married—and many of them have nothing to do with marriage. Calling does not mean serenity and absence of pain. It means living in the presence of many things and growing in maturity.

So we throw no crumbs to single love. It is not only single, but singular. It is *agape*, and *agape* as much at its best as the best of other situations. We will not praise single people for being single, or offer them forms of compensation. We will let them be, for they are of the very organic fabric of the whole humanity. Every woman—whether married or not—gives the gifts of her femininity to all, to both men and women. All men give of their masculinity into every situation where it is required. Men and women are one across the board. Feminists and masculists would discriminate between the two and try to hinder the ‘one-flesh’ union. Such union is not confined to sexuality. Sexuality is not merely the gift of physical intercourse, it is the range of the glory of a woman, and the glory of a man, as they meet in mutuality of vocation.

IT IS with tears of joy, then, that I look at people like Simon Traill and Mary Jones, Father Damien and Mother Teresa, Paul and Phoebe, Jesus and the many Marys, men and women at work everywhere. I have seen so many of the single ones act as mothers and fathers, as brothers and sisters, as aunts and uncles, and even as grandparents to the children of parents too busy to attend wholly to their own. I have seen my wife come to have many daughters and innumerable sisters, and I have seen myself to have many sons and daughters which never came through blood relationships.

This is the wonder of the family. Gender-obsessed persons miss ‘the many splendoured thing’ which is the Kingdom of God, and the community of Christ, and the family of the Father. Shortfalls in human relationships are more than outweighed by the experiences of God as *agape*, present in our loved ones, and

the ones we have not previously known. There is not one of us who has not seen wonderful examples of love, of men and women devoted to serving their fellow creatures as they serve God.

I often pride myself on being objective, on seeing things in a reasonably detached way, but I know that I am very emotional. I know that if I tried to tell the stories of single persons who have ministered to my personal emotional and heart needs, as also to my bodily needs, that I could not do so. There would be too many tears that would be shed, too many deficient words and sentences to be able to describe what is so. In poetry I can somehow say some of these things, but I am completely undone by the acts of love I receive. I have no hesitation in saying that I am grateful that God has permitted some people to remain single for their singular ministries. They may not know it, but I do, and I often suspect they do also, in their inner being, when they are not fighting or protesting against what the world calls 'injustice'. I wish I could communicate to them the knowledge I have—that they are complete, so very, very complete! I imagine that one moment in glory, one flash of experience in the Holy City, and the major event promised to us all—seeing God face to face—will not only wipe away all tears, all conflicts and all sufferings, but show us that these things were the precious coinage of love, and the great maker of the greatest of all in character—life in the Divine *agape*, life in the heart of the Triune God.

## LOVE NEVER FAILS

AND now, let me tell my own story regarding love, God's love and human love also, and love that endures unto the end, and finally is the very end in itself.

Some people, when they grow to be as old as I am, get into their 'anecdotalage'. They cannot stop telling the stories which they have lived in, and the things they have seen. I guess I am in my 'anecdotalage'. So many stories come to the surface that I cannot skim them all off, and I certainly cannot do justice to them. It is a few of the stories regarding marriages—successful and unsuccessful—that I want to write in this document.

The matter of marriage—apart, of course, from our own—was first triggered off years ago when I suddenly found myself ordained as a minister of the church, and two young people approached me, wanting me to conduct their marriage service. Fortunately I was not ordained until my mid-thirties, so I was not altogether a novice. Our family at that time consisted of three children, and that was also a help. Even so, I felt a bit helpless. My theological training had been good but fairly theoretical, and suddenly I had to fill in forms, and get these two ready for their wedding. I had done some study on premarital preparation for marriage, and, of course, on marital relationships.

What I had not counted upon was infatuation. These two were starry-eyed, bushy-tailed, romping in infatuation. They scarcely heard a word I said. They had eyes only for one another. They had just reached marriageable age, and so were very young in the things of life, although they thought not. I suppose I must have seemed like an aged person to them, and probably—in their eyes—had gone past my prime. Then, after all, what would I know? I was not at the age of infatuation, and knew nothing of

the thrill of it. Wearing a clerical collar, I was deadlly dull.

It suddenly struck me horribly that their marriage wasn't going to last; not, anyway, unless I could really get to them. I made arrangements for our next interview, and as quickly as possible got myself a meeting with my boss, who was called the 'titular Rector' of our parish. In fact we never saw him in our pulpit; he was busy conducting the first Diocesan Marriage Bureau—a sort of *avante garde* operation, so rare in those days. I was astonished at the line-up of folk waiting to talk to him, and I think they saw my worried look and picked up the matter of my tension. I was allowed to see the great counsellor before them, being as I was at the head of the queue.

That was a great chat we had. Having tidied up loose ends of parochial affairs, I was able to share my misgivings with him. He was very sympathetic, and also very informative. I sat back whilst he told me all about marriage. I wondered what I had learned in the seminary, but was grateful for what he taught me. In the end he gave me a book. I remember the title and author: *The Sex Factor in Marriage* by Dr Helena Wright. That was in the early fifties, and so began my learning the mysteries of married love. I left the waiting room, passing through the clients who saw my look of satisfaction and the glaring dust-jacket of *The Sex Factor in Marriage* and decided that my marriage would now probably hold together!

I again interviewed my enamoured couple. There they were—young, bright, fascinated with each other, and still soft-eyed. This time I did not feel so helpless. I began to tell them all about married life. The strange thing was that none of it came out of my interview with the titular Rector, or even from Helena Wright's book, which I had read dutifully, even avidly. No: it came from my own marriage. I told them how I had come back from the war a bit disillusioned in human nature, and finding women—for the most part—a bit empty and scatter-brained until I met the woman I sensed was going to be my wife. I was sure she was not empty, but a substantial person.

They listened pretty well, to give them their due. They nodded agreement from time to time. I was trying to tell them not to depend on infatuation, and not to base their union just on their

bodies and the sexual activity which would be theirs. In those days a minister would not dare ask whether a couple were going virginally to marriage. He would be met with high indignation, and even with disgust. One had to talk obliquely, as it were.

The two assured me it wasn't mere infatuation. They were going to have a great marriage. I sensed their pity for my apprehension. Their infatuation resumed. They had heard me out. Now the big thing was the wedding.

Well, of course, the day arrived. I was as nervous as I had been at my own wedding. Somehow we got them married and they sallied off to have photographs and a good reception. I had begged off the reception legitimately, and they had calmly accepted that.

I said to my wife, when the ceremony was over, 'I give them two years.'

She looked at me with her clear grey-blue eyes and said, 'If they're lucky.'

They were back in eighteen months. At least he was, complaining that his wife didn't look at him these days. They had terrible arguments. She was saying that she didn't like sex very much. It was pretty messy. He felt frustrated and almost cheated. I talked as best I could. I gave him a copy of Helena Wright's book and he said he would look at it. After a week his wife came and talked to me about him. She certainly had a lot of complaints. She was no longer bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. She just drooped. She listened listlessly and went off. I never did hear what happened.

After that I would not marry folk that I thought were just infatuated and not deeply in love. Not that I refused them outrightly, but I suggested they should marry at their own parish churches and not at my city church, where to be married was somewhat of a social event. I would have quite a number of interviews for those I did marry. Gradually I was building up both a theology and practice of marriage. I was working in a parish which had only a handful of homes which were not broken ones. In the days when we were far from being a permissive society, the local community was composed of divorcees, *de facto* relationships, and mostly broken homes. The children faced great

difficulties. Adolescent small crime and mischief was at an all-time high. That was why I had to work through these things.

We saw some remarkable things happen in the community, mainly based on the simple fact of God's love in forgiveness. For many, this was a stunning matter. Once a partner discovered God's forgiveness, the marital relationship would change. I remember one woman named Janet, who slipped out of an alley and—looking like the ghost of a woman—asked if she could come to our confirmation classes. Her husband, named Laurie, was a militant communist, a union man, and saw himself as a rationalist. He was cruel, to boot, but he let her come to the classes.

It was there she found forgiveness. She went home and loved the man who had often brutalised her, brought women into their bed, and who cursed her up hill and down dale in his alcoholic bouts. They had a son who was caught by the police in petty thieving, and his father came to me for help. I told him in straight terms why the son was insecure, hearing his father's blasphemy about God and seeing his cruelty to his wife. He took it from me, remained silent, and finally offered to come to church sometimes. If we had a special service for the wharfies, he would read a lesson from the Bible, and he got me into the Wharfies Union Hall to show Christian 'Fact and Faith' films, but he did not change his ways.

Years later I went back to the parish on a sort of sentimental journey. I scarcely recognised the man as he leant over the front fence of his house. He called me by my name, and insisted I have a cup of tea with him. I could see he was a broken man, virtually finished, but he was also a calm and gentle person.

'You know, Geoff,' he said to me, 'God found me. I didn't find Him. I wasn't looking for Him. I refused to believe He existed, but He found me. He found me by Janet.'

He stared at me, and he was near to tears. 'How can a man live with an angel and belt her and be cruel, and bring other women into her bed, and her not say a word, or leave him? She never left me. I used to get at her with every cruelty, to find out whether her faith was fair dinkum. I used to get angrier when I knew it was. I used to tell you I didn't believe in God, but then

how could I believe in my wife if there was no God? No woman would take what she took, and still be faithful.'

The tears were in his eyes as he sipped his tea. 'She's in hospital,' he said, 'and pretty sick. I love her like anything. I've given up the rot. It's just Janet and me.'

He kept telling me it all came out of our ministry and our teaching. It was gratifying. I could see that human love could not have lasted under those conditions. God's Divine love is always the key.

I REMEMBER one marriage in Pakistan where I was a missionary trying to help the local Pakistani pastor. This particular couple had been married forty years. They were a strange couple—he acerbic and bitter, she constantly complaining. I had said at the morning service that we could go to church all our lives and never know God. We could know about Him and yet not know Him. We had Sunday lunch after church at the home of this couple. It was quite a social event.

After the preliminary politenesses and the good meal, we began talking. The husband said, 'You know you said we could go to church for forty years and not know God—well, I've been married forty years and she does not yet know me.'

She was quick off the mark. 'Nor does he know me,' she said. 'He doesn't really know who I am.'

I recognised the stalemate—pun and all included. Their marriage had been arranged for them—as were all marriages amongst Pakistanis. Many of these arranged partnerships turned out to be wonderful. Others were a disaster. I thought that perhaps Pakistani statistics were little different from Australian ones, where people arrange their own marriages.

Gradually I was coming to see that counselling systems, and good information on marital sex life, were not enough. Maybe these things helped, and we should continue teaching them, but we needed to break through into other areas. In those days, in its own conservative way the church in all denominations did not think the pulpit was a place to teach about marital love. For myself, I had little time to do other than preach and teach on the things of the gospel. 'Get all that right,' I said to myself, 'and the

other will come right.' Of course, there was some sense in such remarks.

THEN came the sexual revolution of the late sixties and the seventies. Our own children were caught in the midst of it. We went through the pangs of raising teenage children in the face of the new 'sexual freedom', as it was called. That was when the term 'love' became a cover word for promiscuous living. Folk no longer committed adultery or fornicated. They just had lovers. The wedding certificate was a meaningless bit of paper, although bits of paper called dollars never seemed to lose their significance.

I saw crazy things happen in churches. Pastors became unfaithful to their wives, and if the powers that be sought to discipline them, then they were 'intolerant' and 'unloving'. Some congregations fractured for want of moral integrity. I knew of young couples—unmarried—who were shackled up together, and yet were thought of as 'highly spiritual' as they led young people in the matters of the Christian faith. In the sixties and seventies we sowed not a wind but a whirlwind, but the eighties and the nineties have been torrid times. There have always been incest and child molestation; there has always been homosexuality; there has always been what is now termed 'kinky sex'; but all of these have burgeoned out into proportions that have not been known in the West in many Christian centuries. These are the cyclones that are devastating society. The dreadful fallout—the effects upon children, and effects of shattered homes—is untellable.

We have the phenomena of drugs, increased alcoholism amongst young people, and the thing called 'street kids'. Somewhere in the back of all this is the tyranny that the sexual revolution—so-called—has exercised. The rage of children at their parents—particularly parents who have separated or divorced—and the failure to give securing discipline have brought a dreadful harvest of relational weeds: thorns and briars. The 'liberating' effects of hard rock, where emotion is simply like steam blowing off and being used to no useful purpose, has brought unsettlement to the human spirit, and not serenity.

Men and women in their middle age and later age have

suddenly felt betrayed. They looked for a grand love in their lives, and all they have is the mediocrity of a marriage where powerful love is virtually absent. Feeling cheated of the grand *amour*, they look around for new and exciting adventure. So spouses cast off each other, or betray each other, showing incredible selfishness in fighting over the possessions they have accumulated. Their children wonder at the corruption of the parents they once respected and even adored. Scepticism and cynicism set in with younger people, and even their marriages are affected. So society crumbles from its old forms, and tries to rebuild new and freer associations, but not much has been gained by it all.

IN THE seventies I found myself teaching about the biblical ways of man and woman, of marriage and human sexuality. I can remember the crowded meetings when people listened—often with breathlessness—and sincerely sought to discover the reality of true marriage and family. I felt compelled to write and publish books on the matter. I am sure there were weaknesses in them, and in later editions I sought to correct these, but the books were trying to say something in the face of a tide sweeping not only our nation, but also the churches. It was the time of growing feminism, of the formations of the homosexual battalions and their pugnacious militancy. I think I have always recognised the validity of many feminist complaints, and I have recognised that deep human relationships can be formed between men and men and women and women, but I have never seen the necessity for these to have sexual connotation or expression.

I was sent more deeply into understanding the Scriptures, and into researching the matter of Divine and human relationships. I saw they all started with God, and indeed, within God—those Trinitarian relationships of Father, Son and Spirit, which not only give us the pattern for human relationships, but the Divine power to live in them and by them. These were the insights I was able to use in preaching and teaching, and take into the counselling room, and write about in books. I want to complete this story—for it is a story, a recounting of true happenings—by sharing the principles that have come to me, not as a detached theology, but as theology of the Persons of the Godhead, and

human beings caught up into relationships with the Triune God and so able to relate to men and women of all kinds everywhere.

I WANT you to imagine the countless number of people I have counselled, that is, shared with, in their lives and their difficulties. Each is a person; each is unique; but each is deeply troubled, and each wants to be helped. I want to help, but in a way I am helpless. Only one thing has ever stood in the way of solving difficulties, and that is the human will. Behind the human will, and driving it, is the view that each human being has of God. All human beings are born into this world with a view of God which is at heart determined by what they wish to believe or disbelieve. This last sentence may sound like a generalisation that is incapable of proof. In practice, I find that it is so. Man has been made in the image of God and so he must have some understanding of God, but he—or she—dare not see God as love, as holy, as worthy of worship. Man rationalises God as an overbearing authority, a demanding and judgemental deity, and a threat to human freedom, that is, human self-will and human self-determination.

People carry these images into their marriages. At first their interpersonal passion carries them over their inbuilt difficulties, but rarely does this last. I will not pause to describe how they consequently view one another, particularly as they see masculinity in the light of their own fathers, and femininity in the light of their mothers. I will not speak even of marriages prejudiced in their outcome by premarital sex, or the consequent domination of parents who have never let them go. I will not even take up the matter of authority—that is, authority being love and not domination—but I will take up the matter of human relationships.

As we have said, true human relationships begin in God and with God and come to us through creation into the image of God. God is love and we are fashioned from love, and until we love one another we are never truly, relationally free. We have a drive to love, and even a legal compulsion to see that we do, but *our love is always self-seeking*. Rarely is it ever primarily for the other person. In social and sexual intercourse we can have great enjoyment if we are first ‘other-person’ regarding, that is, selfless in our love. But then, we ask, who is?

I have only one aim when I counsel others, and I know the impossibility of fulfilling that aim. The aim is that the listener—the one needing help—will radically change his, or her, view of God. When a person really sees that God is love—and not love that is similar to human *eros*—then the transformation can take place. There is no way of people seeing that God is truly love until they have a revelation of love in the Cross. In my teaching and counselling, I am shut up to this. Janet saw the love of God in the Cross and could go back to her husband Laurie and love him—whatever. I have seen countless others do the same thing. Jesus only ever captured men and women by his love—by his love that forgave them and set them free for true love-relationships.

In theological terms I am saying that every human creature has a drive to love. We all know ‘love is the way’, and many of us seek to do it that way, but our love turns out to be self-centred, self-seeking, self-regarding. We give in order to get. When, however, we see God as Father, as love, and the Son to be ‘the Son of His love’, then we, too, are filled with love, and can return to our human situations to love with a new and different love. It may, of course, be scorned, and even rejected, and it may also enrage the one we love, but the true confrontation of love takes place in a relational situation. Not all marital situations are healed, not all familial ones are improved, but at least one spouse and parent has the key to life, which is the genuine love of God against the spurious love which is often called *eros* because it is not, essentially, God’s love, that is, *agape*. Often that one spouse or parent is the means of changing the relationships.

FINALLY I want to tell the story of love in marriage. Marriages may start—as they say—on the wrong foot. They may begin in *eros*, and even *eros* has its special grades and qualities. Many families have survived on *eros*, and done better than families who might have claimed *agape* as their driving force. If we can talk about ‘infatuation *eros*’, then that does not take a couple very far. That kind of romance often gets choked in the coming of babies, the washing of nappies (or the cost of ‘Huggies’!), and the day-to-day work of living, paying bills, bringing up the children,

trying to live in a competitive world and squeeze a little pleasure and excitement from it. The wonder is that more *eros* marriages do not break up, and of course many of them are fragile, whilst numbers of them are just held together with relational barbed wire, so to speak.

Premarital sexual intercourse puts marriages in danger from the beginning. The matter is too complicated to explain here, but God's love and forgiveness can clear the bill and set a couple free for better love—true love, God's Divine love in them. Whilst God's love is perfect, we are not always perfect in His love. In a strange way of speaking, we alternate between *agape* and *eros*, or confuse and mix the two. However, we can learn, even if only slowly.

The thing about *agape* is that it is God Himself. This simple statement should clear the matter. God Himself is love: God is in us, and we are in God, just as the Three Persons are in one another. When the Triune Godhead comes to dwell in our heart, *agape* is the liberal *personal* supply by which we can tackle relationships. Paul said that *this* love—not our love—'bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things'. Then he added, 'Love never fails.' The absoluteness of the verbs, especially the last one, is enough to dishearten us until we see it is only God's love in us which can fulfil these verbs. How many times we fail! Yet the love of God in us can see us through all this bearing, believing, hoping and enduring, and we need never utterly and finally—irreversibly—fail.

So in marriage we unconsciously negotiate the shallows and reefs that would snag or becalm us. What then is the secret, if indeed we can call it a secret? It is that God's love—*agape*—goes out to us and for us, so we go out to God, and thus to others and for them, all the time exploring them, all the time identifying with them, so that they open up to us, and we to them, and such a going out can never be called an invasion, an unwanted intrusion. We were made to be members of one another, and to find our true being in this. So in the particular case of marital partners, and the wider case of family members, we are constantly giving to one another, receiving from one another, never secreting ourselves away from another, yet never imposing upon that one.

In marriage the two being one is called 'one flesh', but then that 'one flesh' does not turn in upon itself. It is never just for itself. It is always for others, and perhaps first for its children, and in being that, never comes to the end of that love endeavour, but extends it even further in the grandchildren, because the family of God is wider than the 'one flesh' and the 'one family', so the possibility, and permutations, are endless. This, then, constitutes the truth that love never fails, that is, never comes to an end, and if it could come to an end, then that end is God Who is no end, but always the stretching out of love to even wider dimensions.

IF ALL above sounds rather high-flown, it is not so. When in *eros* we desire one another for pleasure, for interaction, for usefulness, for companionship so that we will not be left alone, then working against this position is the ageing process. When the mind of a man stays at the age of youth, and he requires continuing youth in his companion, then age will defeat that, and he will be diverted to other youthfulness. *Eros* sacrifices the partner when age creeps on it, but *agape* embraces the other in the depths, and not only knows the immortality in the other that is the gift of God, but the beauty of any human being at any age, and no less in old age. The adventure of life is shared not over and against death, but as it approaches death which is its coveted end, since death is the entrance to the fuller, freer eternal life that death cannot impede but to which it conducts the marital pair who are one flesh. It matters not who passes through the heads of death into the eternal harbour, for resurrection to life will unite not only those who were partners on earth, but all who are members of the body of Christ, the fraternity of the Father, predestined to be participators in the Divine Nature, and members within the membership of the Triune Godhead.

This is what is meant by 'love never fails', for its goal or *telos* (which may now seem far away to us who live in this world), its promise, never wane, and its fulfilment is never in doubt. Thus hope abides with love, and love works through faith, and the present exercise of love knows no bounds.

## LOVE LOOK

Did they tell you that your love  
Kept lapping up against my shore—  
My silent, lonely shore?  
Did they tell you in that moment  
A tireless hunger was appeased?

Did they tell you that that love—  
Not your responsive *eros* but His *agape*—  
Shone through your gentle eyes,  
Commanding peace to me  
In a day I knew pain  
And time's sheer endlessness?

When I look down upon  
That silent lapping on my passive feet,  
A greater living memory  
Eternalises your thoughtful gaze,  
Brings all I ever knew of love,  
Until enveloped in that smile  
I live for ever, and again.

## POSTSCRIPT

### A STORY ABOUT THE STORIES

THERE was once a man who desired to share all he had gained in life through the one art and talent he had, namely writing. Like all human beings he had his limitations—limitations of ability, limitations of expression, and so limitations of communication. When he first began learning his art, he was naïve enough to think he had something quite unusual to give to other people, and that some people would ultimately receive it. This was not a bad illusion, for it kept him writing even though he lived in a world of editors' rejection slips. Here and there, some pitiful editors gave him smidgens of hope, and they were enough to encourage him to write further.

To tell the truth, the man just loved writing, whether others would read what he wrote, or not. The very pleasure of writing kept him at his self-selected craft. The glorious day came when he had his first acceptance by a journal, the publishing of a short story. Occasionally a poem would be accepted. Then it happened that his stories were accepted in great volume. This seemed to assure him that he was a writer of some quality. Sometimes he mused, wondering whether he wrote because he was naturally a storyteller, or just because he had worked at and developed the art of writing.

He had always loved telling stories, as do most human beings. Throughout the history of the human race there have always been narrators, tellers of tales and myths and legends. Such tales generally make sense, and they help to develop the traditions of thinking and action which help to constitute a culture. In a way of speaking, as are the stories, so is the culture. It is fascinating to

think of the way in which tales have been born and developed, some adding to the fear and terror of the human race, some giving it great joy and hope, and some simply entertaining in various ways. Human beings certainly love entertainment, and there must be reasons both good and bad for this love.

This man of whom we are speaking was really a narrative person. Even when he wrote discursive books and articles he unconsciously turned the use of words into narrative form, since words generally constitute pictures in the minds of listeners and readers. It is an interesting fact that illiterate people have a more vivid understanding of words than those who have accustomed themselves to word-reading. Because of the printing press, reading is a linear matter, that is, 'line upon line', whilst hearing stimulates mind visualisation. Good writers generally use words in as stimulative ways as are possible to them.

This man whose story we are telling came to see that communication is primarily a matter of the heart, and not just of the mind. As we sometimes say, communication is primarily visceral and not only cerebral. One feels in one's gut, and not in one's mind, although what comes to the mind is what stimulates the emotions in the gut. What one sees sends messages flashing to the brain, which then causes the body to receive the impact and stimulation of the revelation and *to act as it wills*. In some people's thinking, Man is really the product—almost the mechanistic outcome—of these behavioural stimuli. The man whom we are describing did not see it that way. He believed Man is a strange and wonderful creature who somehow has his being in the decisions of his will. The principles of truth he understands deep down in himself, and these form his natural wisdom, for which, or against which, his will moves because of the drive of his heart.

Our storyteller's experiences of life—like those of most other people—were made up of the bitter and the sweet, the light and the dark, the painful and the pleasant, and he sensed that accordingly he must act by his will, but what he wanted was a will-in-wisdom, and this component of wisdom was what he cherished most. He tried to develop it, and found that in order to do so he must at all costs prevent himself from falling into ego-centrism.

He must turn out to others, think of others, care for others, try to give to others out of what he had received himself, no matter from Whom or whom he had received it.

He tried the measures of prose in all its categories, and poetry and similar forms of heart-writing. He wanted it all to be palpable, felt and understood by those who read his writings, those who saw his actions, and those to whom he gave emotionally by word and thought and act and internal intercession—the unseen action of prayer. In giving, he found fullness of life. In seeking praise, he found continual disappointment. In inviting criticism, he found the minds of human beings vary according to custom, culture and personal predilections, so that he had to assess their judgements by also understanding them.

Time and again he would get caught in a poem which sprang from his heart and his brain, and in that poem he would become lost in joy at truth, and he would think, 'Others must see this. This will surely transform them wholly when they do,' but in the next second he knew it would be at most the one or two who would ever receive his communication—so strong is the will of each person, so resistant to the wisdom of another person, or to God. He knew it to be the height of egoism to think his special poem was truth of itself and from itself, that is, from him. He also knew that prophetic utterances come to artists whose task it is—whether in pain or delight—to pass them on.

He learned that ambition is more dangerous than anything, since in it lies the will to ego-extension, ego-glory, but that was the hardest of all lessons to learn, since every human being has been born in the image of God and since God—above all—is assiduously to be glorified. In Him lie all the great properties, elements and attributes upon which a human being may draw, by which a person may become even more fully his own person, especially whilst constantly giving to others.

He had not only a dread of being captured by ambition, but being captured by sloth and self-indulgence. He understood the scorn of the old Stoics for such foolishness, but he also knew that all of life was to be enjoyed, and no less its sufferings and pains. He knew that everything he received was always first given—including suffering. With this dread was also another

dread—that somehow he might be rendered useless, speechless, without the outlet of giving, of communicating the wisdom given to him, without being able to form his wisdom in modes they could understand.

Then he saw that his dread was baseless. What a person is, is what he is by the grace of God, and it is that grace—shown most powerfully in weakness and even in senselessness—that he would communicate, anyway. What he was would come through, even if he could not send it speeding on its way. He could be read, even in the helplessness of his body, the limitations of his mind, and the restrictions which might come upon his entire being. He had seen such power of weakness in children, in women, and in men, and he had marvelled. One tremendous thought sustained him in the dark hours, and it was that at some time or another, now, and even in the far future, there would be the one or two, here and there, who would read what he had written, understand it, be enriched by it, and—if weary and disheartened—be encouraged by it, even to the point of enriching and encouraging others. Other writers whose spirits were flagging might be stimulated to carry on in the great succession of truth and love.

THE supreme value of life had come to him as love, the love of God, and yet not merely as an attribute which resided in God but which came to man through revelation, and filled him. Filling him it gave him wisdom of a new kind, of the highest kind—the kind that outstrips and surpasses all that is of man's elevation. If the heart of God is love, and God is love, and if the Three Persons of the Godhead are from all eternity to all eternity Love, then the image of God—Man—must be filled with the innate drive of love. Love must be the genesis, purpose and goal of every human, and only refusal of that love can twist and deprave and pervert the human spirit. He knew the terrible drive that could sometimes urge him to be, of himself, the lover—the one who outstrips all others in love, that surpasses all in the fame of love, and thus becomes as a god in himself, a dangerous idol to the idolatrous human race. Yet he also knew that infinitely stronger than this deadly drive was the drive of the Divine love which unmask the human ambition to be as God, of itself, and

so defeats that most perverse drive that remains in Man until the end, seeking to topple him into the abyss of self-love—the self-love which disguises itself as *agape*, but is only *eros*, and which in the end brings death.

Sometimes when this dreadful drive was recognised and defeated he longed to enter into the sufferings of man, in love, and so make right what was wrong, share with what was painful suffering, help in what was the deepest of human distress, but he learned that to take the burden of the human race upon oneself is again to deny that One has already gone on that venture, that *Agape* has already manifested itself as love in identifying with every form of human distress and suffering, has entered into every dark heart, every bitter spirit, every angry and resentful mind, and into those injustices that cause the gall to rise in affected humanity. This total identification with others has already been effected by the One who was called 'the Son of His love', and because he was sent by the Father Who is love, through the Spirit who is the Spirit of love, he—the Son—was able to accomplish that supreme act of love, the effects of which are eternal and never to be reversed.

Now, if the Son had entered the sufferings of others—as he was compelled by true love to do—then there was no sense in which the story-writer could say he was giving of himself, from himself. He could only claim that he was being the artist who tells his friend that God has already come to the distress, pain and misery of that person, that He has borne all griefs and carried all sorrows, whether they be of the sin and evil of that person, or from the sins and evils of others. Such bearing of griefs and sorrows has taken the sting out of guilt, the pain out of injustice, and set the person at peace in a world even of wars, of blatant cruelty, and of terrible injustices. All suffering creatures—even down to the aborted foetus—can know that God's sovereignty not only designs life and future for it, but also true justice in the way and manner of His love. The unloved can know they are loved—whatever—and that there is no place in all time and eternity for authentic protest against God.

Love, then, he learned in his wisdom, is always resident to the heart which will be one with that love, which will live by and

from that love. The intimacy of the Three Persons in their love for one another—that oneness which is Love, which is the One God—is the intimacy into which God draws His true people, and makes them one to share in Him, and with Him, forever.

Knowing this caused the man of whom we speak to believe he had the most precious thing of all to convey to the human race which had been born of God in creation and reborn of the Son and the Spirit in the Cross of redemption. That which he had to communicate was—and will ever be—‘love is from God’, ‘God is love’, and so, ‘Beloved, let us love one another’. This is the essence of all true stories. These are the stories and the poems he would seek to write, the hymns he would seek to sing to God and all the human race, and the life he would desire to live against all other drives that would seek to get him glory for himself.

LEST all of that above should sound very high-flown, idealistic and difficult—if not impossible—to fulfil, then let it be known that our story-writer and poet is a very much down-to-earth person. You cannot find out much of the nature of God, especially God as love, and not know, when it comes to living life, that love itself is very much down-to-earth. It has to do with love of parents to children, of children to parents and to one another, with the mutual love of man and woman, with married love, and love that determines to live for the good of the community, recognising what is necessary authority and not shrinking from obeying or exercising it as is proper within the community.

By the same token—reality in all things—the writer of stories and poems of love cannot deny the high nature of love. It lifts marriage, family relationships, relationships within the community of Christ, and societal relationships in the broadest sense of that term. Whilst life must have its horizontal outworking—the living of it on the earthly plane of life—yet it must also derive from the source beyond its humanity: God Himself.

Thus the writer has had to work out the details of love in the actions of life, and this has taken wisdom, much pondering of the problems which confront, and the fruits which encourage, as well as the tragedies which must happen in the course of every life. Only when the writer achieves liberation from himself as the

centre of all being and action does the love of God have its full power, impact and fruitage.

It is then quite a story—the story behind the stories which are those of love.