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"In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

The Christian Faith and Mental Health: Part X—(Conclusion)

By the REV. EDWARD HEEREMA

Spiritual Advisor at the Christian Sanatorium, Midland Park, N. J.

THE story is told of a king whose youthful ambition was to gain a knowledge of universal history. At the end of twenty years his wise men came to him with twelve camels, each laden with five hundred volumes. The busy king threw up his hands and cried, "Kindly abridge!" At intervals during the succeeding years smaller and smaller editions of the history of mankind were brought to the king, until finally to an aged king lying on his deathbed a single volume was brought. But it was too late. The king lamented, "I shall die without knowing the history of mankind!" Then one of his scholars stepped forward and said, "I will summarize it for you in three words: *They were born, they suffered, they died*".

Such are the overtones of unspeakable sadness that rise from the relentless turning of the wheel of human life when there is no grace-given faith in a loving and righteous heavenly Father to dispel these sad overtones and to replace them with the sweet music of assurance and of hope. Yes, Jung was right when he declared that it is by "faith" which is "in the truest sense a gift of grace" that we can "break the spell that binds us to the cycle of biological events".¹ Where there is no such faith there is pessimism, hopelessness, despair—the pessimism to which Joseph Wood Krutch gives voice with the peculiar eloquence of a sad song in the night when he says that man has "no reason to suppose

that his own life has any more meaning than the life of the humblest insect that crawls from one annihilation to another" in the world of modern scientific speculation in which "the role which he [God] plays grows less and less, and man is left more and more alone in a universe to which he is completely alien".² The same spirit is evident in the rather peremptory prayer of Louis Untermeyer's "Caliban in the Coal Mines":

"Nothing but blackness above
And nothing moves but the cars.
God, if You wish for our love,
Fling us a handful of stars."

Man is not an animal. He is a living soul, a being of reflection, of volition, of yearning, aspiration and hope. As such he must have an unfailing spring of spiritual resources. He needs a full panoply of spiritual weapons to wage the battle of life successfully in calm and storm, in joy and pain, in robust youth and in declining years.

Earth cannot furnish any such sure spring. Its resources are soon depleted and its weapons worn. It is clear that the living God must so fortify the soul of man. Earth's treasures are devoid of any fit instruments to meet these basic demands of the soul. Heaven's treasures alone can do that. But we face a persistent question: How can we know that heaven's treasures

¹ See THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, April 10, 1943, p. 110.

² Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper*, pp. 9f.

The Calling of the Westminster Assembly

By the REV. JOHN MURRAY

Professor of Systematic Theology in Westminster Theological Seminary

CHAPTER XXIII of the Westminster Confession of Faith deals with "the Civil Magistrate". Section III of this chapter reads as follows:

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

The last sentence of this section is the defense, on the part of the Westminster Assembly, of that Ordinance of the English Parliament of 1643 in accordance with which the Assembly convened on July 1st of that year. The Westminster Assembly was the creature of the Long Parliament.

The Westminster divines did not, of course, regard the authority of Parliament or of any civil magistrate as essential to the calling of an assembly such as the Westminster Assembly was. In Chapter XXXI, which deals with "Synods and Councils", the divines also said:

As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with, about matters of religion; so, if magistrates be open enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with other fit persons, upon delegation from their Churches, may meet together in such assemblies" (Section II).

Nevertheless the Westminster Assembly was actually convened by Ordinance of Parliament.

The Long Parliament in England began in November 1640 and it continued until April 1653. The stirring events of this period made the Long Parliament one of the most important in British history. By no means the least significant of its actions was the Ordinance by which the Westminster

Assembly was called.

Parliament in England consisted then, as it exists today in Great Britain, of two Houses, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Shortly after the Long Parliament began its work, the House of Lords appointed a committee consisting of ten bishops and twenty lay peers to take into consideration all innovations in the church concerning religion. In the autumn and winter of 1641 there was prepared what is known as the Grand Remonstrance of the House of Commons. In this Remonstrance the desire was expressed that there should be "a general Synod of the most grave, pious, learned and judicious divines of this island, assisted by some from foreign parts professing the same religion with us, to consider all things necessary for the peace and good government of the Church". These actions of the two Houses evince the deep interest and concern that Parliament entertained with respect to the matter of reform in religion.

On April 19, 1642, the House of Commons ordered that the names of divines, fit to be consulted with in reference to the matters stated in the Grand Remonstrance, be presented to the House. In a few days this list was completed. It consisted of two divines from each county in England, two from each University, two from the Channel Islands, one from each county in Wales, and four from the city of London.

On May 9th of that year the bill for the calling of an assembly of divines was brought in to the House of Commons. The bill was later slightly amended by the House of Lords and fourteen names were added to the list of divines. By June 1st the bill passed both Houses of Parliament.

The King, Charles I, as we would expect, was not hospitable to any such measures pointing to reform. So he withheld his assent. Two other bills received the same treatment by the King. But Parliament was not to be frustrated. Both Houses then resorted to the method of Ordinance by their own authority and by June 12, 1643, this Ordinance for the calling

of an assembly passed both Houses.

It was this Ordinance that brought the divines to Westminster. There attaches to it for that reason alone a very unique significance. But of equal interest is the actual content of the Ordinance as it defines the purpose for which the assembly was being called and in so doing exhibits the zeal which both Houses at that time entertained for the purity of religion. In part the Ordinance reads as follows:

Whereas, amongst the infinite blessings of Almighty God upon this nation, none is or can be more dear unto us than the purity of our religion; and for that, as yet, many things remain in the Liturgy, Discipline, and Government of the Church, which do necessarily require a further and more perfect reformation than as yet hath been attained; and whereas it hath been declared and resolved by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, that the present Church-government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical officers depending upon the hierarchy, is evil, and justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom, a great impediment to reformation and growth of religion, and very prejudicial to the state and government of this kingdom; and that therefore, they are resolved that the same shall be taken away, and that such a government shall be settled in the Church as may be most agreeable to God's holy word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the Church at home, and nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland, and other Reformed Churches abroad; and, for the better effecting hereof, and for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the Church of England from all false calumnies and aspersions, it is thought fit and necessary to call an Assembly of learned, godly, and judicious Divines, who, together with some members of both the Houses of Parliament, are to consult and advise of such matters and things, touching the premises, as shall be proposed unto them by both or either of the Houses of Parliament, and to give their advice and counsel therein to both or either of the said Houses, when, and as often as they shall be thereunto required.

The Westminster Assembly, called in pursuance of this Ordinance, consisted of some one hundred and fifty

members. Thirty of these were members of Parliament, the remainder divines, representing the chief parties of English Protestants except the party of Archbishop Laud. The representative character of the assembly presaged much debate, but it was just such diversity that provided the occasion for the prolonged consideration that yielded the rich theological finesse by which the Westminster standards are characterized.

The Assembly was called to meet on July 1, 1643. Two days before the meeting a royal proclamation was issued prohibiting the meeting. Notwithstanding the royal interdict, sixty-nine of those appointed met. They convened in Westminster Abbey for divine service, and both Houses of Parliament adjourned for the purpose of attending the service of worship. Dr. Twisse, the prolocutor or, as we

might say, the moderator of the Assembly, preached. After divine service the members of the Assembly met in the Chapel of Henry VII and then adjourned until July 6th. The sessions of the Assembly were held in the Chapel of Henry VII and also in what was known as the Jerusalem chamber. Thus began the work of this memorable and fruitful Assembly. It was in the course of the next five years that the Assembly produced those documents that are the perpetual memorials to its fidelity and the permanent deposits of its labor, "The Directory for the Public Worship of God", "The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government", "The Confession of Faith", "The Larger Catechism" and "The Shorter Catechism". Subsequent articles will deal with some other phases of the proceedings and work of the Assembly.

unfaithful wife. The northern kingdom was notoriously wicked and idolatrous. And Judah, remaining after the northern kingdom had fallen, proved as bad as Samaria, or even Sodom. Foreign alliances, departure from God, idolatry, and immorality are the repeated sins of the chosen people.

The Allegory in Ezekiel 16

In chapter sixteen Ezekiel portrays the foundling child who became the unfaithful wife. The subject is the city of Jerusalem, but the whole nation of Israel is meant. Jerusalem was a girl-child with heathen background, who was cast out in infancy to die. But God looked on her, and rescued her from death. She grew to maturity, though in a poor and mean condition. Then God took her to be His wife. He bestowed on her every gift and privilege. But she was disloyal to Him. She lavished on idols the gifts God had bestowed on her, and even sacrificed to idols her own children whom she had borne to God. Borrowing the idolatries of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, she aggravated her guilt by making these her paramours. So gross was her sin that she became the reproach even of the Philistines. Utterly incorrigible, she must therefore suffer humiliation and ruin. Yet God would not forget His love for her. He finally would pity and restore her, giving her Samaria and Sodom for daughters instead of sisters. At last humbled, ashamed, and forgiven, she would learn the true character of God. This education would be by way of sin, suffering, and judgment.

The Allegory in Ezekiel 23

The allegory of the sensual sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, is closely allied to that of chapter sixteen. But here, as in Jeremiah 3:6-13, the separate existence of the northern and southern kingdoms is recognized.

Oholah (meaning, her tent) is Samaria. Oholibah (meaning, my tent in her) is Judah. The first name may mean that the first worship of God in Israel was in a tent, or tabernacle. The second name may mean that God appointed His worship in the midst of Judah.

Both Oholah and Oholibah are represented as being led astray in Egypt in their youth. Both were espoused to God, and both were unfaithful to Him. Samaria took as her lovers the Assyrians. Then she took the Egypt-

Unfaithfulness

A Meditation on Ezekiel 16:1-63; 23:1-49

By the REV. LAWRENCE B. GILMORE, Th.D.

Stated Supply of the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati

IN LITERATURE, fidelity to real life is called realism. Because of the sinfulness of human nature this realism creates an ethical problem. The problem is: How far shall the writer go in portraying sinful human existence, and in how much detail shall he describe life in its sordid aspects? Some great novels, such as those by certain of the Russian writers, exemplify realism of a deep and sombre kind that commands respect, and forms in the mind a wholesome revulsion against moral ugliness. On the other hand, many writers appear to enjoy wallowing in depictions of human frailty and sin, or in narrating scenes of crime and sensuality for the sake of monetary gain. The critic can soon tell to which school of realism the writer belongs.

Holy Scripture, which, because of its divinely inspired character, surpasses all other literature in viewing life steadily and seeing it whole, contains realism that commands the reverent attention of the thoughtful mind. In the Bible the sins even of God's chosen people and their greatest heroes are not glossed over, but rather are written as with a pen of

iron and the point of a diamond.

Probably no chapters in the entire Bible portray sin in its horror and ugliness with more graphic realism than do Ezekiel's chapters sixteen and twenty-three. The imagery, repellant to Western taste, is probably introduced, as one commentator suggests, with the stern purpose of breaking down the unrepentant pride of the people of Judah and Jerusalem by showing them the inexcusable guilt and vileness of their conduct. At any rate, we are shown not only how wrong, but also how hideously ugly, is unfaithfulness to God.

The Historical Background

In the Old Testament there often occurs the figure of speech in which Jehovah is regarded as the husband of His people Israel. "For thy Maker is thy husband; Jehovah of hosts is his name: and the Holy One of Israel is thy Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Isa. 54:5).

The prophets from Hosea onwards speak of idol-worship and unfaithfulness to God under the figure of unchastity. Israel as a whole proved an