

*“Let us seek to be  
delivered from  
trifling prayers, and  
contentment with  
trifling answers.”*

“WHEN THEY HAD PRAYED,  
THE PLACE WAS SHAKEN.”  
ACTS 4:31



Be still.

# The Magnificence of Mercy

Excerpts from the book by Geoffrey Bingham

IS NOT MERCY A RELIC OF BYGONE DAYS,  
SUCH AS WHEN PORTIA PLEADED WITH  
SHYLOCK TO SHOW IT TO HIS VICTIM?

IS IT A THING MORE FITTED FOR THE  
GRAND OPERA THAN THE BEGINNING  
OF THE 21ST CENTURY? WHAT IS THE  
WAY OUT OF THE VAST HUMAN MISERY  
OF OUR TIMES? WHAT WILL MAKE US  
MERCIFUL TO OTHERS IN AN AGE WHICH  
REALLY NEEDS MERCY?

What is there about mercy which  
would demand the writing of a  
book? Only one who has been  
delivered from misery by mercy could truly tell  
us. Often in human living we see people who  
were once desperate, unable to get themselves  
out of their insuperable difficulties, and we  
have seen a person or persons exercise mercy  
and liberate them.

Biblically, Man is in an inextricable situation  
of misery. God's mercy is not something which  
in human terms we would call involuntary.  
God moves in mercy to release Man from his  
misery. If He does not move to release Man,  
then He cannot be called 'unmerciful', since  
mercy is something He does of His own will.  
**Were He obligated to move, then mercy  
would not be mercy.**

I have been, over many years, the object of  
God's mercy. I *know* that mercy, and it never  
ceases to astonish and humble me. As I  
understand it, God has mercy when men in  
guilt have terrible misery. He also moves in  
mercy when situations, which do not  
necessarily arise from personal guilt, oppress  
human beings to the point of intolerable  
suffering and distress. Yet again, He moves in

mercy to give rich vocation in life to persons  
who have not previously had direction and  
purpose, or who have had somewhat pointless  
vocations, and minor goals for living. Since all  
of these situations are the lot of most of us,  
mercy comes as a beautiful and liberating  
action of God. **Only one who has known  
mercy in these ways would want to write or  
tell about it.**

It has often been my experience that I—with  
many others—have often cried for mercy, and  
it seems, in all ages, to be the cry of many  
hearts. **Some simply do not address Christ  
because they do not know he is a great source  
of mercy.** There are those who cry to God,  
although they do not know Him personally.  
One does not need to read a book about mercy  
in order to cry out of the misery that oppresses  
and the doom that threatens. Mercy is scarcely  
a matter of research! Even so, I have been  
richly rewarded in the digging I have done—  
exploring the Scriptures which are resonant  
with God's great and practical pity.

I have come to see that Israel needed, wanted  
and received certain foundational realities in  
regard to God, especially as He revealed His  
glory to them in His covenant. In particular, in  
Exodus 34:6-7 He revealed His attributes of  
mercy, favour, steadfast love, long-suffering,  
faithfulness, forgiveness and the holiness  
which does not forgive evil where Man is  
impenitent or scornful of covenant goodness.  
These 'qualities' of God were unchanging and  
unwavering. God kept reminding Israel in  
both their adversity and prosperity that He was  
the Lord and as such unchangeable, that is,  
wholly dependable. So by the law, by the  
prophets, and by the constant acts of God they

were reminded of this covenant God and His  
great character.

**Human beings, even covenant-related human  
beings, have a way of forgetting God, trying  
to ignore Him as they seek to go their own  
ways.** We would all have to admit to this. The  
incarnation of the Word—God becoming  
Man in Jesus—is the most remarkable miracle  
in history. In him was not merely a *reminder* of  
all that God is, but the very manifestation of  
God Himself: 'Emmanuel, God with us!' Jesus  
was mercy incarnate, as he was love, and  
goodness, righteousness and holiness  
incarnate. God spoke to Man through His  
Son, and still so speaks.

It was the great act of the Atonement, that of  
giving His Son up for us all, which was His  
supreme act of mercy. **His movement in  
history to set Christ forth as His required  
and satisfactory propitiation is what has  
caused the world to think.** It is startling—  
God abandoning up His only and true Son.  
We are confronted by it. What does it mean?  
What must we think and do in the light of that  
act?

The truth is that we are confronted by  
mercy—mercy incredible and unspeakable.  
We cannot hide from the Divine mercy. It is  
always there before us in Christ. We cannot  
evade history. No other persons confront us as  
does Jesus, and no other act has ever equalled  
or surpassed this act—not even any other act  
of God.

## MERCY IN TODAY'S WORLD

Mercy is a word that is rarely used today. It is  
virtually absent from our conversation, and is  
not found in our modern songs. A simple  
description of mercy is 'that pity which is

practical'. What we see on our TV screens of suffering through droughts, floods and wars often moves us to pity. 'Compassion' we call it, and are glad that we still have feelings. **Mercy is pity and compassion which seeks to do something about the situation of suffering.** As we will see, time and again, mercy is aid given to help a person or a people out of intolerable human misery.

Modern humanism has engulfed most of us. We have said goodbye to the 'God of the gap', since the gap between our lack of knowledge and modern science has been filled. God is redundant—given in that He still exists. We can manage quite well apart from Him—given enough time and thought—so that misery can eventually be eliminated. Meanwhile, we are a century, beyond all other centuries, which has mercy on people in misery. We congratulate ourselves. Even so, there are still those indignant ones who might accuse God of being unhearing—callously indifferent to the human plight. For the most part, however, humans seem no longer to think of God doing anything. On the one hand they think they can do something about most things, and on the other hand they shrug off the matter of human misery as though a good dose of human entertainment is the best antidote for anguish. Entertainment is a vast industry today—a concerted attempt to deny the reality of Man's pitiable plight.

Rightly seen, Man's misery cannot be so easily neutralised. We demean Man when we think of him as incapable of great misery. His lofty character makes him a candidate for suffering of the most terrible kind. In the context of deserved anguish, mercy shows itself as a beautiful thing. When it comes unbidden, then it brings surprise of the richest kind.

Man without God is in deep pain. God in His compassion moves the affairs of men and nations to release the pitiful from their plight of pain.

### THE MERCY OF MAN

If Man needs the mercy of God, he also need the mercy of Man. Robert Burns wrote ('Man Was Made To Mourn'):

*Man's inhumanity to man*

*Makes countless thousands mourn!*

**Man is never truly merciful until he has tasted and received the mercy of God.** Under mercy he proves most merciful. The magnificence of human mercy is told well by the beautiful Portia as she faces the angry and merciless Shylock (Shakespeare, 'The Merchant of Venice'):

*The quality of mercy is not strained,*

*It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven*

*Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest,*

*It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.*

*'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes*

*The thronèd monarch better than his crown.*

*...It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,*

*It is an attribute to God himself,*

*And earthly power doth then show likest God's*

*When mercy seasons justice.*

Countless thousands mourn Man's inhumanity to his own race, but when mercy comes it is

sweetest of all—whether from God or Man.

### MERCY AND THE MODERN MAN

In one sense, Man is always modern. Innately he does not change through his generations, but it seems that this generation of our race is more merciful than at any time in human history. When did nations have pity on other nations such as they have pity today? When did one country send to another to help it in drought, famine and other calamities? When did governments set aside a percentage of their annual income to give aid to less fortunate peoples? We are witnessing a marvel today not known in other centuries.

Cynics might say that such giving is not wholly disinterested, and that it is enlightened self-interest which is at work, yet there can be no doubt that the wretched plight of starving human beings in flood-time and famine—as we view such pitiable suffering on our TV screens—moves many of us to give, and even in a sacrificial way. There is commendable mercy of a sort abroad. Some would claim that this is a spin-off of the Christian gospel—the good news of a loving God, translated into practical action. It might well be. The Church has had its sad days of cruelty and casuistry, but there has always been an unfailing ministry of mercy in healing of the sick and wounded, care for the poor and starving, teaching for the illiterate and comfort to the hurt and distressed. That is one of the glories of its history.

Present humanism seems no less eager to bring succour to the human race. The humanism of which we speak is mainly Western in origin. It is more than a remove from orthodox Christianity, but it retains the 'do-goodism' of the past generation. When 'doing good' becomes divorced from the constraint of godly mercy and grace, then it degenerates into either a hard, Pharisaic pietism, or a sentimental moralism that fails to get at the heart of human misery. **By all means let social aid be done—whatever may be our motives for doing it—but social aid, when given and done, may fail to touch the deepest need of Man,** that is, liberation from human misery. It may even simply be 'the aid-trade'—an action triggered by guilt in our Western countries, guilt at having more than we need. Better this kind of guilt than no guilt, but much better the mercy that does not spring from guilt, but from grace—that which is thankful for prosperity, but has genuine mercy on those in misery.

### THE TRUE GIVING OF MERCY

There can be no doubt about the matter of true mercy. The Biblical teaching is that we must see the extent and nature of human evil and the need for Divine mercy that is required before we can rightly embark on giving mercy to others. Much that passes for mercy today may even be—as we have suggested—a soporific to our consciences. It is often pale and weak mercy which we dole out to the human race, because, in fact, we ourselves have not come under the magnificent mercy of God. We have seen no need to do so. **We have deficient views of evil.**

We see Man more as victimised by history than as suffering for his own sin. Our humanism has watered down the evil of Man, and we have a careless ignorance of the vast powers of darkness. **We give Man the crust of our sympathy, but starve him of the bread of life that his spirit needs.** To give the former brings some supine satisfaction to us, but the latter requires great love and a deep involvement in true suffering.

### THE HISTORIC CRY FOR MERCY

There is no question about the need for mercy. Mercy is practical pity. The Bible portrays God as moved with compassion, doing something for Man in his misery.

Mercy is needed when a person or a people can do nothing about their situation. They are—so to speak—pinned down under the pressures that bring suffering. Often there is a cry for help. David, under the intense guilt of his sin—so suddenly revealed by the prophet Nathan—was struck with the evil of his sin and himself. He cried to God for mercy, for he dreaded the outcome of his crime. 'Have mercy on me, O God!' he pleaded.

Another Psalmist—unknown by name to us—said, 'Out of the depths I cry to thee, O LORD!' (Ps. 130:1). He explained, 'If thou, O LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?' (Ps. 130:3). Like David he dreaded the outcome of his sin, but like David he knew God to be merciful. Habakkuk the prophet knew with sinking heart that Israel must be scourged by the Chaldeans, that 'bitter and hasty nation', and he cried to God, 'in wrath remember mercy' (Hab. 3:2). **In all of these cases the persons seeking mercy know they are not entitled to it, but they fear the outcome of their sin.**

In the Gospel of Matthew there are two occasions in which blind men seek deliverance from the blindness (9:27-30; 20:30-34), an occasion when a Canaanite woman cries for her daughter to be delivered from demon-possession (15:22-28), and an occasion when the father of a demon-possessed son pleads for deliverance of his child (17:15-18). In these cases they cry out, 'Have mercy!' They are in a situation from which they cannot extricate themselves. Those who are blind know the misery of not seeing. The mother and the father cannot bear the terrible distortions of the human spirit which they witness in their children.

One of the most poignant cries for mercy is told in the parable of the rich man and the poor man, often entitled 'Dives and Lazarus'. The rich man in the torment of hell lifts up his eyes to Abraham and cries, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame' (Luke 6:24). **This is a story of a man who has put himself outside mercy, and cannot rightly expect it.**

History is filled with cries for mercy. In war there is no mercy. In the cruelty of rapists, homicides and genocides, the victims have cried for mercy only to be denied it. The poor and weak have often heard their cries for mercy

fall on the deaf ears of the rich and the strong. Parents have been merciless to children, and children to parents, as also brothers to brothers and sisters.

If our century is said to be the one in which mercy is widely practised, let us remind ourselves of the massacres which have taken place within it. Massacres are not peculiar to our century, but some of the most horrific of them have taken place in our own lifetime. Six million Jews destroyed in 'The Holocaust' has been matched by the twenty-five million Russians liquidated under Stalin. There have been horrible tribal genocides committed on the African continent, and fearful purges in South America. Muslims and Hindus destroyed each other at the time of the division of India and Pakistan. The tragedy of Muslims and Christians in Lebanon, of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, shows us that there is little mercy shown in the name of nationalism and religion. This is to say nothing of two world wars in this century, and the innumerable lesser wars—both cold and hot! It is doubtful whether any war can be called essentially necessary, but when they happen they are not the scenes of mercy.

### MAN'S DEEPEST CRY FOR MERCY

The starved person may be fed by someone who has had mercy on him. The poor may be comforted by the largess given to him. The sick may be healed and begin life afresh—in health. The insane may find sanity through a miracle of healing. Wellbeing may come to nations, and even prosperity. All these things may happen and yet the misery of Man—his deepest misery—may not be alleviated. It is to this misery we must penetrate with a view to understanding it. When we come to understand it in some measure, then we may be able to share the mercy needed with those who need it.

**What often prevents us understanding the deepest elements of human misery is our activity to alleviate misery.** Unfortunately, it is more at the *seen* level of misery that we work, and not that intangible and *unseen* level where the misery is most felt.

### THE MERCY OF HUMANISM

Humanism is certainly out to get the best deal in life that it can get for Man. Of course—humans being what they are—there may be strong elements of selfishness in some of us so that we get the very best deal we can for our own selves, and in the process trample on others. Even so, the humanist is an optimist. He believes Man has within himself the capacity to deal with the problems that face this world. Given enough education, training, practice and time, there is nothing he cannot eventually accomplish.

If we think this reasoning is idealistic, and not capable of fulfilment, let us not think the humanist to be a blind fool. He sets about doing something for Man in his present dilemma. He knows that Man's problems lie mainly within himself, and not necessarily in the nature of the universe. We have a great host of human

helpers today, and they seem to be doing some good around society. Whilst they have not in any way changed human nature, they are at least a help. They help confused people cope for the moment, if not permanently. Their care and concern bring great comfort to many. The band of helpers presses on doggedly, sure that one day they will effect a genuine change in society. In their own way they are people of mercy. Professionalism may dog their steps, but on the whole they are out to help Man. They believe this is within their capacity.

**But the Biblical idea of mercy has been reduced or obliterated.** A new kind of mercy is abroad which seems to outmode the old. A new kind of healing is in the air, which takes notice of our modern anthropological and sociological insights and moves within the perimeter of these. This new mercy seems more down-to-earth, more practical, more pragmatic. We need to face the fact that a different healing is about, and it is in fashion in many of our churches. Theology has to a large degree given way to psychology, although some brave spirits have sought to make a synthesis of the two.

We ought to see the nature of Biblical mercy, and determine whether it is outmoded. It is possible that the new mercy may originally have stemmed from the Biblical, and it is also possible that if it ceases to understand its Bible origins, or cuts itself off from the parent plant, it may root itself in such soil as will not sustain it or keep it vigorous. We need to see whether our modern understanding reaches the depths of the human spirit, or whether it stops far short of that. **Is it possible that we are seeking to have mercy where we do not understand the misery Man is suffering?** Are we in the same case as those whom Jeremiah criticised (Jer. 6:14; cf. 8:11; 30:11-14): 'They have healed the wound of my people lightly [as though it were a scratch], saying "Peace, peace," when there is no peace'? Is there a misery of the human spirit which our modernity—with all its insights—cannot really touch? This we must see. The cry for mercy may not be articulate in so many words, but it seems to emanate from the human race in every generation. It is not difficult to know it today, if we are looking.

### THE CAUSE AND NATURE OF THE GREAT MISERY

Man's major misery is that he does not know God, that he is not himself—Man—because he does not know God. Man is thus devoid of his true self. His misery lies in opposing God. We could almost wish a curse on those who ignore this reality, or scorn it as an idiot idea, for they obscure the sad but brilliant truth that Man is existentially a void without God, devoid as he is of creational and redemptional reality. Every atom of himself strains away from himself as it also strains towards God, strains away from God as it also strains towards himself. This is the painful dilemma of Man: made for God, he seeks to live for himself, and knows the misery of self-dislocation.

Along with this misery is the dread of God, the

fear of judgment, the confrontation of human death—his! There is the deprivation of the true glory, and this is self-deprivation, as it is also self-depravity. It is this lack and this lostness which drives Man to emulate God, to seek to justify himself in his universe, and which causes him to devise an imitation or surrogate mercy, so that he imagines that what God does not do, he—Man—does in the most practical way. He seeks to deny his innate misery by a devised exoteric mercy, that is, having mercy on something or someone outside his own inner misery. All such self-justifying attempts only increase his guilt because of his refusal of God's grace, and so his self-manufactured grace is a denial of the true God. This serves to increase the content of his own guilt, and so extend his misery.

When we ask whether God will have mercy on humanity in such a case, the answer is, 'Yes, for the riches of His mercy are inexhaustible, and mercy is great beyond the aggregate of our sinfulness and misery.'

### IT IS HUMAN TO BE PITIFUL, COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL

Because Man is in the image of God, he reflects God's nature, and as such should reflect His pity, mercy and compassion. This is often what he does, but much of his reflection of God is adulterated, is mingled with egotistic motivations and actions. Man on his own is self-seeking, and it is this which has caused much human suffering. Why is it that Man, being the reflection of God, is so often hard, harsh, unsympathetic and cruel? **We need to know the things which make the human heart become hard.**

### THE HARDNESS OF HUMANITY

Because Man is alienated from God, he has 'dried out', so to speak, of the true juices of proper human living. Man nevertheless often shows surprising elements of pity, mercy, compassion, tenderness, gentleness and care. Even so, the very people who can be so moved, often can also be callous and cruel in other elements of their lives.

The Biblical teaching regarding hardness of heart takes into account Man's self-chosen alienation from God. Being far from the source of mercy, he becomes merciless. The author of Hebrews warns his Christian Jewish readers, 'Exhort one another every day...that none of you may be *hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*'. In Hebrews 3:7-8 (cf. Ps. 95) Israel was warned, 'Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as in the day of testing in the wilderness'. Sin further alienates us from God—the source of true compassion and moral sensitivity. Idolatry takes the place of God and is cause for heart-hardening.

Whilst we know that Pharaoh's heart was hardened by God, we know that the real meaning of this was God's judgment, which gave Pharaoh over to the hardness of his own heart. It was simply that he could not say, 'I, of myself, have hardened by heart against God, and he cannot soften it', but rather God could

say, 'This is my judgment that Pharaoh have a hard heart. He who hardens his heart I will harden in judgment.' Pharaoh hardened his heart by refusing to listen to God's word.

Jesus understood hardness of heart. In Mark 3:5 we are told that when many opposed his healing on the Sabbath 'he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart'. When he told the parables he knew they would bring hardness of heart, for in Matthew 13:14-15 he quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 which speaks of those who heard the word of Isaiah becoming hardened in their hearts against it. In Mark 6:51-52 we have the astonishing statement, that following the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and the walking on the water during the time of terrifying wind, 'they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, and *their hearts were hardened*'. On a later occasion (Mark 8:14-21), as they were in their boat and had forgotten to bring bread, he cautioned them, saying, 'take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod'. The leaven was an insinuating, penetrating unbelief that the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod had in regard to Messiah. In fact, the disciples were unbelieving or in danger of not believing, for he asked them—they who had been fed with the loaves and the fishes:

Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not perceive or understand? *Are your hearts hardened?* Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

Two miracles of feeding had taken place, but they were still worried about bread. This was the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and Herod. By the questions he fired at them, we realise he was distressed by their hardness of heart.

## THE HARDNESS OF BELIEVERS

Where reverential fear of the Lord wanes, so does tenderness. Sin itself catches up its slaves in more sin, reduces our taste for God, steering us towards the things of sight rather than faith. To begin with, the drift may be slight, faint and imperceptible. The gap widens, the heart dries up and hardens. Moral and ethical insensitivity are well on their way.

Many a believer has pleasant memories of his or her earlier years when there was a simplicity about love, a tenderness towards others, a gentleness in relationships. There was pity for those suffering, compassion for those in misery and aid for those in trouble. Nothing was too much trouble. What, then, changes all this? Often Christians harden themselves against others who disillusion them, cheat, betray and criticise them. Often compassion is met without

gratitude. Kindness can be taken for granted, or even as a 'right'. Some turn from the simplicity of the Gospel to more sophisticated ways of dealing with human troubles. Some drift from a healthy and satisfying devotional life—a warm, loving relationship with God turns to a hard rationalism. In some cases, because of offence taken at the failures of Christian leaders, people have stumbled and turned away from the faith—a 'little one' has been caused to stumble. What many of us deplore is how we can become dry in devotion, unresponsive to a world which needs salvation, uncaring for things other than our own matters. We fail to 'look on the things of others', and 'put others before ourselves' (Phil. 2:1-4). Often our Christian duties become mechanical. Love seems to have departed. Even our emotions have dried up. We are very factual, objective and unmoved persons. We seem to be a million miles away from pity, compassion, sympathy and empathy. We lack mercy.

If we deplore our lack, then that at least is a good sign. **Let us realise that it is because our love has faded.** In Revelation 2:1-7 we read that the church at Ephesus has 'abandoned its first love'. It is strongly reprimanded and urged to immediate repentance. In I John 2:15-17 the aged apostle warns his people against love of the world, for this will take away the love of—and for—the Father. One of the saddest cases is in I John 3:16ff., 'if any one has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?' John urges, 'let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.' It is no wonder that Jude exhorted his readers, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God'. **Not to love the Lord is not to love others.**

## MERCY BEGETS MERCY

'Be merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful.' **He who has not tasted the mercy of God will not be merciful, and he who has not known God's love will not love in the way of true love.** There can be a recovery from hardness of heart through drifting from the former 'single-hearted devotion to Christ', from the consequent rebellion of our hearts, from excessive love of pleasure and position, and from the idolatries which have come to possess our spirits. **The way back is to read afresh the Word of God**, to hear its admonitions, to heed its warning, to repent of the drift and dryness of our lives, to believe God's promises, to obey His laws, and to reject our idolatries. In this way, we will come anew to loving sensitivity to God, Man, and to our true selves.

## THE WRATH OF LOVE

*'In wrath remember mercy...'*

It would seem that Habakkuk had to remind God that in his wrath He should remember

mercy towards errant Israel. The covenant revelation of God in Exodus 34:6 was that He was (is) 'slow to anger' (Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15), especially in regard to Israel. The prophet did not have to remind God, so much as he had to remind himself of the love of God, and to see God's judgment as the wrath of love. If we ask what causes God's actions of mercy, grace, slowness to anger (long-suffering), steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiveness and even refusal to clear the (impenitent, obdurate) guilty—as set out in Exodus 34:6-7—then we must answer that *it is His love*.

Here we are indebted to St Paul. His passage of Ephesians 2:1-10, and in particular verse 4, tells us that Man, being under wrath, receives mercy, and that God's mercy springs from His love, 'But God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us...' Paul was not saying anything new when he insisted that mercy springs from love to those under wrath and misery. This thinking was clearly present in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 54:8 we saw God's statement, 'In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer'. Doubtless the 'moment' seemed of inordinate length to Israel under wrath, but God's 'everlasting love' reduces it to a mere moment. Likewise the smiting and healing of Egypt is the principle by which His love has wrath, 'And the LORD will smite Egypt, smiting and healing, and they will return to the LORD, and he will heed their supplications and heal them'.

Markus Barth, in his commentary on Ephesians, remarks:

In the Bible the 'wrath' of God, in turn, does not represent the intemperate outburst of an uncontrolled character. It is rather the temperature of God's love, the manifestation of his will and power to resist, to overcome, to burn away all that contradicts his counsels of love.

'**The temperature of God's love**' is a powerful phrase. In the Old Testament, this temperature is sometimes shown as white-hot when God's holiness is violated, but when wrath has done its work the stage is set for Divine mercy.

## THE EVERLASTING MERCY

Before time, before creation came to be, God's mercy planned the redemption of the human race. Even before our grave act of the Fall had taken place—our sin of rebellion against the Most High God—mercy had planned Man's release from misery. In time that mercy has been shown towards the recurring distress and wretchedness of Man. Then Jude bids us, 'wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life'. Thus mercy is ancient, it is new, it is eternal. ●

**"It is a small matter to make heaven ring with song; the glorious honour given us is to make this very wilderness, this earth under the curse, ring and ring again with our joyful burst of praise to our unseen but much-loved Lord."**