

# BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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## **THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.*  
(Rom. 14:4).

It is so fatally easy to value another brothers or sisters service by ones own bushel measure. We all desire very earnestly to serve our Lord and the interests of His Kingdom. We generally take delight in speaking of Him and of the Divine Plan to and who will listen. And we all have our own ideas of how best the Gospel may be preached. Is it the very intensity of our own earnestness in this direction that makes us want every other bondslave of Jesus Christ to serve in just the same manner that seems good to us? Is it the measure of our own personal talent and success in one particular field of ministry that blinds us to the possibility of effective service being rendered in another manner, *in other hands*?

*"There are diversities of gifts...there are differences of administrations but it is the same God that worketh"* (1 Cor. 12:4--6). When will we learn that the grandest characteristic of all Gods handiwork is variety and that He has ordained the accomplishment of His service in such a fashion that "every joint" supplieth a contribution fitted to its place in the body?

Says one, loftily, secure in his ability and privilege to address the assemblies as befits the office of an elder in the Church, "there is no doubt that the preaching of the Word is *the* great means the Lord has ordained for the spiritual growth of His people." All very well -- but what discouragement to the brother who is temperamentally quite unable to stand before an audience and deliver a prepared discourse, but in his own quiet way can lead a study circle in leisured discussion of the Scriptures to the very real edification of his fellows

It was teachers birthday. For weeks beforehand her pupils had been busy making pretty aprons and tending little plants in pots to give her on the day, for this teacher was greatly beloved. At length lesson time was over and they crowded round with their offerings, stepping back with gratified smiles as the teacher expressed her surprise and delight at each successive gift. Last of all came the "black sheep" of the class, grubby and untidy, half hesitating and half defiant, avoiding the amused looks of his classmates as he extended a tightly clenched fist and deposited into teachers hand ---- a hot and sticky piece of butterscotch and three marbles.

But that teacher was wise --- wiser than many who have attained eldership in the assemblies. "Oh, how lovely", she cried, smiling down at the anxious little face below her. -"Its *years* since anybody gave me marbles for my birthday and I just adore butterscotch."

The grubby one made his way back to his desk, head held high and face radiant. He loved his teacher, and he had so feared his gift would be rejected, but she had understood. He had done what he could..

Brethren in the Lord! Be very careful how you disparage the service another is trying to render, just because you "cannot see what good it will do". You may be the means of dashing the enthusiasm of one who will never be able to serve in the big things, as you are privileged to serve, but is nevertheless trying to contribute some small mite to the work of the Master Whom we all love. *"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."*  
A.O.H.

## **DANIEL IN BABYLON**

*The story of a great mans faith*

### **16. At the End of the Days**

A. O. Hudson

The old man's task was done. He sat, quietly scanning the little pile of tablets the writing upon which he had just completed. There would be no more to put on record. The revealing angel had said his last word, and departed. The story had been told, ranging far into futurity, into that dim time when God, rising up in judgment, would have abolished evil and brought in everlasting righteousness. And Daniel was old, too old to take in any more, too old to do any more writing. He began to realize that now. He had to accept the fact that his life's work was finished and he must lay down the responsibility and wait for the call. What was it the angel had said? "*Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*" He began to feel that was what he needed -- rest. He had led a full and busy life; survived hazards and dangers; administered great tasks and discharged heavy responsibilities; manifested sterling allegiance to God in the face of opposition and persecution. Now he was ready to yield himself to the care of God whom he had served so faithfully. He prepared himself for the rest of death knowing of a surety that at the end of the days he would stand in the resurrection of the just and see with his own eyes the reality of the visions he had just now recorded. With that he was content.

Daniel's final revelation led him far beyond the political events and foreshadows of his own time. It spoke, not only of kings following kings, and empires following empires. but also of the gradual emergence. on the stage of world history. of a determined and calculated enemy of all righteousness and goodness, an enemy that would at the last stand up to oppose the power of God come forth to win the world for Himself, and be utterly destroyed before that power. It spoke of the kingdom which will never pass away, the world in which God's will shall be done as it is done in heaven: of the resurrection of the dead and the triumph of the righteous; of all those glorious themes which colored the words of the prophets and inspired their hearers. It set the seal on his work of sixty years and constituted him instructor for the coming twenty-five centuries of prophetic study.

It is probably true that Daniel never understood much of the detailed prophetic meaning inherent in that angelic revelation of world history which constitutes chapters 11 and 12 of his book. Even today there is considerable uncertainty and difference of opinion as to the right interpretation of much of these passages. Admittedly the opening verses of chapter 11 deal with matters which would have been plain enough; he had already learned, eleven years earlier, in the third year of King Belshazzar (Chap. 8) that the Persian power would one day give way to that of Greece. Although that event was still two centuries away the influence of Greece was already being felt in Daniels time and he would not find it difficult to interpret that part of Chapter 11. But after that the story went into details which must have been completely incomprehensible to the aged prophet. He could only have come to the conclusion which Jesus at a later date had to impress upon his own disciples, that there would be "wars and rumors of wars", that "nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but the end is not yet". After a lifetime of studious

and devoted waiting upon God to know when the golden time of blessing was destined to break upon the world, he eventually had to accept the Divine decree, which those other disciples had in their day and turn also to accept. "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, but my Father only.*" There is a lesson in that for all Christian students of prophecy. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that, no matter how closely imminent the words of the Book and the signs of the times make the Day of Deliverance appear to be, the day and hour is locked up in the counsels of the Most High. It may be an age hence; it may be tomorrow night. We have to be ready for either eventuality .

Although Daniel would not be able to anticipate the detailed outworking in history of the strange story he had written on the tablets, there were certain embedded principles which he would be able to follow. He was, of course, by no means the first Hebrew prophet to be used by the Holy Spirit of God to transmit knowledge of God's designs for the end of time. Joel, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Ezekiel, all had spoken and written of those things in previous years and Daniel would assuredly have possessed and been familiar with their writings. He was by no means a stranger to the general tenor of Divine revelation concerning happenings of the End. This crowning revelation. coming to him at the end of his life, was in considerable degree supplementary to what he already knew from his studies in the books of the earlier prophets. He must have been familiar with the prospect of a day to come when the hosts of the north, the enemies of Israel, would come out of their place to invade and destroy the chosen people, and God would intervene with the powers of heaven to destroy those forces of unrighteousness and deliver them. The factor which was new to Daniel in his own revelation was the delineation on the one hand of a personal figure who would be the Divine Leader and champion in this battle --- one like the Son of Man; Michael the archangel --- and on the other hand the crystallization of all those world forces allied against God, the Antichrist, into one figure.

It is to Daniel that we owe the first shadowy silhouette of that dark, dread figure which has so intrigued -- one might almost say obsessed Christian thought through the centuries, "*He, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God showing himself that he is God.*" That was St. Paul's definition in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Who or what is he: man demon, or world system? On what stage does he appear; Greek, Roman, or yet to be: Rome, Babylon, Jerusalem? Christians have bandied these questions to and fro for centuries. Only in a planned prophetic study can they be properly discussed, and certainly Daniel had no consciousness of the developments of thought into which his dim picture of a godless and all-conquering king who met his doom at last on the sword of Michael would lead.

Perhaps, though, these last two chapters of Daniel's prophecy do sow the seeds of a prophetic distinction which only comes to full flower in the New Testament, the slow but inexorable heading up of all the various and mutually antagonistic forces of evil in the world into one iron spearhead of resistance which as a single unit meets the powers of righteousness and by them is utterly broken. Daniel saw the development of earthly empires and the rising arrogance of man and the lining up of those powers into two camps -- the king of the north and the king of the south. Whether we do or do not understand the extremely detailed narrative of the continuing conflict between these two powers does not alter the fact that quite evidently a long period of time is indicated. But when we come to the end of chapter 11 and the time when Michael stands up to wage final war, there is only one enemy. How it comes about. and when, may or may not be certainly apparent, but here in Daniel, as in the New Testament, God rises up in judgment at

the time of His kingdom to find one united enemy, and one only, standing against Him. Perhaps the vision of Revelation 19 where the Rider on the white horse comes forth from heaven to do battle, is more lucid. In that scene the powers of earth are clearly seen united as they have never yet been united in history *"to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army"* (Rev. 19:19).

It might be, then, that Daniel at the end of his life did see, in shadowy outline, a far future day when all the world and every power in the world save that of the relative few who have retained their allegiance to God, has coalesced into one single, well-disciplined, determined fighting force, drawn up in solid phalanx to resist the coming of the Kingdom of God. That must mean that individual jealousies and national rivalries have been laid aside in the face of what all can see is a greater threat. No longer will it be a question of which type of man-made government is to rule in the earth, but whether man-made government is to survive at all. The standing up of Michael, the opening of the Heaven's and the emergence therefrom of the Rider on the white horse, is the answer.

From that time onward affairs in the world will take a different course. *"At that time, thy people shall be delivered."* *"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."* *"They that be wise shall shine as the brightest of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* (Dan. 12:1-3). The Rider on the white horse; Michael who stands up; these are none other than our Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, come to overthrow the power of evil and establish the Kingdom of God upon earth under which all men and nations will be instructed and led in the ways of God, and the message of repentance, justification and reconciliation preached as never before.

So the old man closed his eyes in complete confidence that it would surely come. He knew and had proved throughout a long life the faithfulness of God. He knew that, like Peter in a time yet to come, he had not followed "cunningly devised fables," but had been an eyewitness of God's majesty. What was it that the saintly Polycarp said when exhorted by the pagan magistrate to save his life by forswearing Christ? *"Eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never failed me. How can I deny him now!"* Daniel must have felt like that. Perhaps his mind went back to the early days of boyhood, when he first learned of God and his plans for eventual world deliverance, at the feet of his mentor, Jeremiah the prophet. Maybe he recalled dimly, because it was a long time ago, the journey to Babylon as a youth of eighteen or so, and his companions Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael, who together with him had refused the rich foods of the palace and because of their abstemiousness had eventually found the kings favor and attained high office in the State. That would have brought before his failing eyes the picture of the arrogant king whom he had been able to serve so faithfully, and the kings family which he had known so well, the gentle Queen Amytis, and Nitocris the kings daughter who had remained so staunch a friend through all the vicissitudes of a life time and into old age. They were all dead now and only he was left. He remembered the kings dream of the image, and how God had given him the interpretation and the understanding that four great empires were to rule on earth and then the kingdom of God come. The leaping flames of the fiery furnace flickered before his eyes, and again he heard the awed voice of the king *"I see four men, loose, and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods."* The thin hands moved restlessly; again he was, in spirit, endeavoring with Queen Amytris to restrain the mad king as he sought to emulate the beasts of the earth, and once more he knew the thrill of hearing the voice of Nebuchadnezzar, restored to sanity,

professing allegiance to the God of heaven. The days of dreams and visions passed across his mind, the visits of the revealing angel, the years of study and reflection when he lived as a private citizen, waiting in patience for the revelation of God from heaven. The shadows in the room gathered and he entered again into the darkness of Babylon's last night, when the Persians besieged the city; the blaze of light at the palace banquet, the writing on the wall, the end of the empire, his brief time of service under the Median King Darius, his deliverance from the lions den. Rapidly the pictures passed before his mental vision and at the end of them all, a golden glory in the background, he saw the fair beauty of the world that is yet to be, the world in which he himself was to stand, in his lot, at the end of the days.

He could see them more plainly now, those his friends and companions of days so long ago. They had all gone in front of him; he had not seen them for a long time. They were there, waiting for him. In the land yet to be, in the end of the days, he would take up his task with renewed strength and ability, and once more serve God to whom he had been faithful, and who had been so faithful to him; serve him in that glory transcendent that will never pass away. The room was getting very dark now, and it was quiet, quieter than Daniel had ever known it. The golden visions flickered on, beckoning him . . . He was going to rest now, as the angel had promised.. but he would stand in his lot. . . at the end of the days.

*The End*

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## **The Holiness of God**

*"Be ye holy, for I am ho/y" (Lev. 11: 44).* If God's Holiness is thus the only hope for ours, it is right that we seek to know what that Holiness is. The Holiness of God is that infinite perfection by which He keeps himself free from all that is not Divine, and yet has fellowship with the creature, and takes it up into union with himself destroying and casting out all that will not yield to him. Holiness is that awful glory by which Divinity is separated from all that is created . . . . but where the distance and the difference is not that of the creature only, but of the sinner. Who can express, who can realize the humiliation, the reverence, the shame with which we ought to bow before the voice of the Holy One? The connection between the fear of God and holiness is most intimate. *"O fear the Lord ye his holy ones. Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord"*

Gods holiness is his glory that separates him by an infinite distance, not only from sin, but even from the creature, lifting him high, above it. But God's Holiness is also his love, drawing him down to the sinner, that He may lift him into his fellowship and likeness, and make him holy as He is only. Holiness is not so much an attribute of God, as the comprehensive summary of all his perfections. It is not holy on earth, but in heaven too, that the Holiness of God is his chief and most glorious attribute. It is not only on earth, but in heaven too, that the highest inspiration of adoration and praise makes mention of his holiness. (Andrew Murray 19th Cent.)

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## **MY GLORY ALL THE CROSS**

*A discourse on Galatians 4: 14.*

*T. Holmes*

The self conceit of man varies little throughout the run of time. Today, as in the days gone by, men dwell upon what they can "do", varied only from time to time by appeals concerning what they "ought to do". The more cultured and civilized the man claims to be, the more he is prone to exalt this sense of "something to do". And, it must be confessed, it is a good thing in this native sphere that man does have within him the urge to "do". In mans relation to his fellow man and to his earthly environment this urge to "do" is a great boon. It is this inborn "urge" that is responsible for all progress and reform that man has achieved. It has carved for him a home out of the forest fastnesses; it has linked his dwelling place with roads (both steel and macadam). it has lit his home with electric light; it has made tools to lighten his toil, and utensils to enhance his pleasure. The measure of advancement under this urge is to be seen if we compare the simple life of the forest folk with the normal standards in a land like ours. A few wild herbs and simple fruits, plus a little fish and flesh, comprise the food of the nomad wanderer in the forest glades. His tastes are simple, his methods primitive, his ambitions nil.

Without this "urge to do" most men might have been the same, though be it said, this lethargic life is not the rule solely of the forest glades. It is seen in the slum --- the hidden world --- within the city gates. Far better that a man should have the "urge to do" than be useless; devoid, of will and drive and goal.

It is when the ambitious man looks up to God that the mistake is made. He wants God to take note of his work, and place it to his account. He expects God to accord him credit marks for what he has done, and to give him a place, in moral things, higher up the scale, proportioned to what he has achieved. He desires to win the same rewards, in the moral world, that he finds in his mundane sphere. A "go-getter" here expects to be a "go-getter" there. And therein lies the germ of his mistake. God has ordained things otherwise. Heaven's blessing of sun and rain may have rewarded the toil and sweat in the harvest field (in measure, more or less, since Eden's days), but Heaven's disapproval has had to fall like frost and snow on man's attempted cultivation of his soul. Man has been slow to learn the ways of God in this higher sphere. God has not asked man to "do" but to "receive" what He has to give. Man does not understand the defiling power of sin, or that his best is far too poor to win him marks in the scale of righteousness. His best attempts have been too short --- too low -- to win approval before the Highest Law. As it was with Israel, so it has been with all.

"What good thing shall I do" has been the quest of ambitious man from ancient days. It is the quest of men today. It is the quest of ambitious Christian men. In the world of today --- the world of the micro chip --- the Christian thinks he has a job to do. He thinks he has to guide the democratic urge to its destiny, and bring in a world of peace and brotherhood. He claims the right to Christianize the consciences of every man, and thus to mold the Universal State.

This outlook is the outcome of a great mistake concerning Jesus Christ. He --- the historic Christ

is the grand model to which the eyes of men are to be directed. His are the principles that are to be adopted; His are the acts to be copied; and He --- the Man of Nazareth --- is to be the inspiration of their scheme.

This may seem right in their own eyes, but it is not accordant with the way of God. God's estimate of Jesus centered in His Cross. God's appreciation of Him arose out of His consecration unto death. Not merely because He was the Man of Nazareth; not merely because He taught lofty principles; but because He presented Himself as a sacrifice for sin --- that was why God loved Him as a faithful Son.

It is not the Teacher from Nazareth that God has set forth in a primary sense to the eyes of men; it is the Victim on the Cross --- it is the dying Lamb of God.

This was arrant foolishness to the worldly-wise in Apostolic days (1 Cor. 1:23). It is so today. Today it is mainly educated men and women who spurn the Cross, and count it foolishness; some who stand before their flocks as representatives of Him they so grossly misrepresent! They laud His spotless life to the skies, but good as this appreciation is, it is not enough. Someone was needed who could *die* for man --- a voluntary sacrifice, by means of which man could be set free from death. And that is what is meant by His Cross.

As he journeyed here and there the Apostle Paul found men ready to boast of this or that. The Jew would make his boast of the Law and of the Priesthood, and the Temple and the Holy City. Some would boast of their fasts and alms, and that they were not quite the same as the other man. Others would boast of the family tree and the long line of their showy ancestry. The Greek would boast of his learning and culture, of his art and statuary, of his cities and palaces. Among them all there was none to be found who would boast of his incapacity and insufficiency, who would tell the whole world he could not do what he ought; and stood before heaven and earth as one who "came-short". Paul did all this to the full! Not but that he came of as good stock as they. Not but that he had "gifts" as excellent as they! But because he had come to know the way of God towards sin --- yes and sinners too! He knew that fallen men could not satisfy Gods Law, and that to fail in one point was to fail in the whole. He knew the best work of men was as but "filthy rags". and that the filth of men and spotlessness of Christ could never blend. He knew it must be "all" of each, or "none" "all of man" and "none of Christ," or "all of Christ" and "none of man". And so he stood and told the whole world he could glory, not in himself, but only in the Cross of Christ; that it was his delight to stand, not on his own pitch, but on the foundation of Christ; that his was no desire to keep the Law, but to find shelter behind another Man!

And Paul was unashamed in all this insufficiency in himself for he found all he needed in Christ. He knew Christ was enough to meet his needs --- his very deepest needs --- and he knew Him to satisfy Heaven's demands, its very highest claims, and he was glad to be enwrapped in another's worthiness, and boast of it before the world.

Others may stand aside to scoff or drown by their concerted shout his boast of Christ --- even thus all was well --- for by this act he was crucified by the world, and the world was made dead to him. Even so must it be with all who would be found in Christ, not having on them their own righteousness!

In the tremendous world that lies ahead many will make their boast of Christ, of His matchless



words, of his lofty principles, of His tender sympathies; but few indeed, judged by the drift of things, will be disposed to boast of his Cross, or take their stand beneath its outspread beam. Men still want to dare and do, to build and plan, to dig and lay their own foundations; but few will be inclined to say "He did it all --- He did it all for me!" And so, some day, the Will of God and the will of man must clash, and the will of man, with all his works and pomps must crash, and lie in broken fragments beneath his bruised feet.

For ourselves we would sing: ---

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus  
We gladly take our stand,  
The shadow of a mighty Rock  
Within a weary land."  
"Content to let the world go by  
To know no gain or loss,  
My former life my only shame  
My glory all the Cross."

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Men and women stand in need of Jesus Christ as they have never done before, yet He can only reach them through his Church. Ordinary folk are frustrated by the wild, unrealized claims of scientists and politicians. Two world wars have left a legacy of sorrow, disease and immorality. Broken homes are not mended by the assurance of a "good time coming" nor are broken lives restored by intellectual dogma. These things need the personal touch of the Savior who walked this earth healing sick hearts and sick bodies. He gave them a message embodied in simple lessons from Nature, which if accepted changed the very lives of his hearers. It is to him that we must point, and we can only do so if we really know him ourselves. We can only direct men and women to the cross of Jesus if we have felt its power in our own lives. If we have been broken and humbled at the foot of the cross and left our burden of sin there, then we shall have a testimony for our neighbor which will turn his eyes towards Jesus. If we walk each day in the light of the cross, with our own lives bared to the penetrating gaze of the Savior, we shall reflect light upon the pathway of some lost soul seeking the way to God.

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"There are commonly three stages in work for God: first impossible, then difficult, then done."

(Hudson Taylor, missionary)

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Conscience tells us that we ought to do right, but it does not tell us what right is. That we are taught by God's Word.

*Henry Clay Trumbull*

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## **AARON --- THE MAN BEHIND THE PRIEST**

A. O. Hudson

He was elder brother of the nation's military leader and deliverer, he himself its first and greatest High Priest, connected by marriage with the royal tribe but a very ordinary and undistinguished personage of whom nothing noteworthy is recorded. His life left no permanent impress on later generations and he is remembered only on account of the dignity of his office.

Aaron was born in Egypt three years before his more famous brother, Moses. Unlike Moses, who was brought up in the royal court and educated in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, he spent his youth in the family circle in the Hebrew territory of Goshen and almost certainly worked as a slave of the Egyptians. There is not much doubt that Amram and Jochebed, his parents, were a devout couple, loyal to God in faith and hope that one day the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled and the people of Israel be restored to the land from which their forefather Jacob had emigrated three centuries earlier. The first eighty years of his life were probably uneventful, marked only by two events. The first, his marriage, at probably round about thirty to forty years of age, to Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, ruling prince of the tribe of Judah, the designated royal tribe through whom Christ would one day come. This union incidentally constituted him an uncle by marriage of Salmon the father of Boaz, the hero of the story of Ruth. The other event, a more saddening one, not many years later, was when his brother Moses, having incurred the wrath of Pharaoh on account of his slaying the oppressive Egyptian overseer, fled into exile in Midia on the other side of Sinai, three hundred miles away, and any dawning hope that Israel's kinsman in the royal court might prove to be the deliverer for which they looked was extinguished. And so Aaron toiled on, hopelessly, not expecting to see his brother again and wondering if God had indeed forgotten to be gracious.

Came Aaron's eightieth year and a few more and life continued as it had done for as far back as he could remember. He could expect another forty years of life but it could only be continued labor and sorrow. He and Elisheba now had four sons but life held out no different prospect and the Divine promise seemed as far away from fulfillment as ever. Of his brother Moses he had heard nothing for forty years past and he did not know if he was even still alive. He believed that

God would one day deliver, and he knew from the records of his people that the four hundred years God had spoken of to Abraham was just about expired and the promised deliverance was due. But the people were still slaves and there was no champion to espouse their cause and lead them to freedom. The old warrior Pharaoh, Thothmes III, who had held them down with so iron a hand, the one who had sought Moses life forty years ago, was dead these six or seven years or more, but the new Pharaoh, Amen-hotep II, was even more rigid and merciless than his father and it did not seem that any power could ever deliver Israel. And God did seem to have forgotten....

*"And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses"* He sat up, rubbing his eyes. Had it been a dream, that authoritative voice, so unlike anything he had heard before. It had been so long since his brother's name had been uttered in his hearing. Despite his many prayers and his constant waiting in faith, God had never spoken to him before, *"Go into the wilderness to meet Moses!"* The tones still rang in his ears, compelling, commanding. He could not banish them from his mind. Somehow he knew them to be from God. The Most High had spoken to him, given him a command. He could do naught else but obey. Slowly he got to his feet.

It was only then that he realized the enormity of his task. He had never been out of Egypt in his life. The expression "The wilderness" was clear to him. That was the term used by the Semitic peoples in Egypt for the district of the sacred mountain of Sinai, sacred to all the peoples of Syria and Canaan and Arabia and the east but not to the Egyptians. In times before their own it was dedicated to Sin the Moon god --- hence its name --- the god worshiped by Terah the father of Abraham, but even so it was revered by every Hebrew as the mountain of God. So Aaron must go to Sinai and there he would meet his long-lost brother. But how to get there? He would only have had a vague idea where the mountain was situated. He went to his labor that day in thoughtful mood.

Aaron probably got his directions from some of the Bedouin merchants who were constantly entering and leaving Egypt with their merchandise, like those who brought Joseph into Egypt four centuries earlier. They were of Semitic race like himself and had no more love for the Egyptians than he, and would readily tell all he wished to know. Then he had the problem of getting across the frontier into the eastern desert. The only crossing point was at Etham where the caravan route passed through for Canaan. Most of the rest was the impassable Red Sea. And Etham was a strongly guarded military garrison post! Perhaps he slipped across under cover of night; perhaps, disguised as a Bedouin, he persuaded some merchant to take him through with his caravan of men and animals. At all events, he attained the other side, and faced his two hundred mile journey. For the first half he had to be circumspect for he was on the road leading to the Egyptian copper mines at Serabit-Khadem in Sinai and there would be frequent detachments of workers and copper convoys and military guards to avoid. After that the going was safer but more arduous. After about three weeks journeying the huge mass of the holy mountain loomed before him, and there he met Moses.

The rest of that story is well known, how Moses told him that he too had received a Divine command to await his brother here, of the incident of the burning bush and his commission to return to Egypt, confront Pharaoh and demand the liberation of the people of Israel, then lead them to the Promised Land. So the two returned together and presented themselves to their fellows, meeting only with a mixed reception, for a new generation had arisen since Moses fled, and those of his own generation hardly knew him except as the highly placed court favorite who

had fled from Pharaoh's wrath forty years ago. But eventually Aaron and Moses did stand before Pharaoh and did lead Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

Moses was the man of vision and the man of action; Aaron, quieter and more hesitant. Moses was born to lead and he dominated every situation in which he was involved; Aaron, more easily led and swayed by others and more likely to accede to the wishes of others. But Moses was physically slow of speech whilst his brother was quick and eloquent, wherefore God made of these two a pair that together were able to outwit the machinations of the Egyptians. *"I know"* said the Lord *"that he can speak well"*. There must have been something in Aaron's powers of expression and the fixed faith in God which vitalized those powers of expression of which the Lord had taken notice, back there in those past years in Egypt.

The weaker side of Aaron's nature comes out in the only two substantial incidents in which he figures during the subsequent Exodus journeying. The first is that of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32). Moses had been so long upon the mountain with God that the people concluded some disaster had befallen him and he would not return. They demanded of Aaron that he make a graven image of God, like those they had seen in Egypt. to go before them as guide, *"for as for this Moses, the man that brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him"*. This is where Aaron, whose authority as chief in the absence of Moses was unchallenged, should have firmly denied the dissidents their way and reminded them of the law they had so recently enthusiastically accepted *"thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"*. An uncompromising stand at this point would have stopped the rot --- for almost certainly only a section, albeit the most vociferous section, would have been clamoring for this innovation --- the better sense of the remainder prevail, and the tragic consequences would not have followed. But, weakly, Aaron gave way and acceded to the demand, even taking the lead in collecting gold and having it fashioned into what the Psalmist later scornfully described as *"the similitude of an ox that eateth grass"*. Moses, coming down at last from the mountain, saw all the depravities of idolatrous worship in full swing, and in his wrath threw down the tablets of the Law and dashed them to pieces. To his violent remonstrance Aaron, weakly, blamed the people and excused himself by saying that he cast the gold into the fire *"and there came out this calf which would be comic were it not so tragic"*. This episode right at the beginning of the Exodus journeys showed up in sharp relief Aaron's unfitness for leadership.

The other occasion, related in Num. 12, concerned the altercation over Moses' wife. Moses, when in exile in Midian, had married Zipporah the daughter of Jethro the Midianite. by whom he now had two sons. (The A.V. in Num. 12 describes her as an Ethiopian woman from which some have surmised that Zipporah was dead and Moses had married again; the truth is that the Hebrew text has *"woman of Cush,"* the Hebrew word for Ethiopia, and it is likely that this is an early copyists error for Cushan, the general name for the Sinai area from which Zipporah came; see Hab. 3: 7.) Aaron and Miriam their sister apparently started some kind of vendetta against Zipporah. The reason is not stated but it can be inferred sooner or later the question of a successor to Moses would arise. Aaron and Miriam were not prepared to tolerate any possibility of a half-Midianite son of Moses succeeding to the position of leader of Israel. Hence the claim that they held equal shares in the leadership. If the Jewish tradition that Miriam was married to Hur of the tribe of Judah has anything in it then she as well as Aaron was connected with the royal tribe and the argument would be that the succession should come through one of them. The Lord took another view and vindicated Moses' authority by striking Miriam with leprosy which

was only removed at Moses supplication. This seems to indicate that Miriam was the principal actor in this conspiracy and Aaron fell in with her, again revealing his inherent indecision and weakness of character. In any case the Lord eventually appointed Joshua to succeed Moses.

The glory of Aaron is that he was called of God to occupy the position of first High Priest of Israel, to represent the people before God in worship and sacrificial ritual, to institute a succession of priests which was the only permanent institution in Israel's history. The system of rule by Judges in the early days gave place to the monarchy, under which kings reigned at Jerusalem, and that in turn to a tributary province of Persia, Greece and then Rome under appointed governors, but all the way through until the time of Christ there were the sons of Aaron in direct line officiating as High Priests. Aaron was a greater man in his official capacity than in his private life. Perhaps it was intended. By such means the Lord might be indicating that, despite our own personal failings and shortcomings and weaknesses, He can use us to do great things in his service and the execution of His Plan if we are truly and sincerely consecrated to him. That Aaron, despite his human failings, was thus consecrated to God there can be no doubt. He was something like Peter in that he failed grievously on two notable occasions in his life yet made amends by continued faithfulness to his calling to the end. He is honored to all time by becoming in Scriptural symbolism the head of the system of sacrifice which prefigured the presentation and giving of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Like Moses, he never entered the land. He died, at the age of one hundred and twenty-three, on a mountain in Edom a few months before the hosts of Israel arrived at the river Jordan where they were to cross and take possession. Miriam had already died, ten or more years previously. Moses also was to come to his end before the actual entry. The children of Amram and Jochebed who, in the Lord's hand, had been the means of freeing Israel from Egyptian slavery and realizing the age-old dream of leading them to the Promised Land did not themselves taste the sweets of success. The people entered in; they themselves await the reward of all their endeavors and all their faithfulness in that day when their Lord and ours "makes up his jewels" and recompenses to all men according to their works.

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*Do not toil to acquire wealth: be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone: for suddenly it takes to itself wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven. (Prov. 23:4-5 RSV).*

Timely advice today, when fortunes are won and lost by unexpected financial crises. A noticeable factor in contemporary society is the intensive and oft-timed frantic endeavor to make money and still more money. Whether it be the manual worker, demanding higher and ever higher wages in proportion to the success of earlier demands, or the business executive working the stock markets, or the housewife buying her lottery tickets, the dominant motive is the acquiring of wealth. And who can blame them when every aspect of modern industry takes measures under the pretext of "efficiency" and "streamlining" to increase its profits, and every national government devises ways and means to extract progressively heavier taxes from its citizens? The acquirement of wealth has become the major preoccupation and few are wise enough to know when to desist.

The Wise Man knew better. He knew how transitory a thing is worldly wealth, even apart from the fact that "you cannot take it with you". And this is the important thing. The life we know is but the beginning of life, a caterpillar stage, as it were. Beyond the traditional three score years and ten lies an infinity of expanding life and increasing achievement, and nothing of this world's wealth is of any value in that world, or those worlds, and the life we shall then experience. Good it is for one to acquire wealth in this world if it is used so to do good, and so to enrich character, that one is better fitted for entry into the next stage of life, but that involves knowing "when to desist"; not good at all, said Jesus, to lay up treasure if one is not rich toward God. To be any use in the next world, treasure must be laid up in heaven.

*AOH*

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## **THE...GENTLENESS OF CHRIST**

*A study of an interesting word*

D. Nadal

*"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you - I Paul." (2 Cor. 10:1 NIV)*

Paul had reason to take the church at Corinth to task for their behavior. They had a number of problems arising out of spiritual pride. Patiently he had dealt with some of these in his first letter to them. In the second he had opened up the wonders of Christian teaching. He also needed to encourage them about generosity to their Judean brethren. Paul did not bully or "tear strips off them". Rather, he appealed to them in the name of their Master who was meek and gentle. Gentle is translated from a Greek word which only appears in the New Testament seven times as either a noun or adjective. In his translation, Moffatt uses six different words. He was not alone in finding it difficult to make a translation that can be understood by ordinary Christian readers. In fact, one English word alone cannot convey the meaning of "epieikes". Yet it was to the Master himself that Paul directed the Corinthian brethren to turn, for Jesus had expressed the meaning of this word by what he did and the way he spoke. Strangely, in doing so, He created enemies.

One of the most familiar and fascinating uses of this word is in Paul's letter to the Philippians (4:5) where he writes *"Let your gentleness be evident to all"* (NIV). In the Authorized Version (KJV) it is *"Let your **moderation** be known unto all men."* and while that is no longer a good translation there is an element of truth in the word "moderation". Forbearance is another word which helps to understand the meaning of this unusual word. In his valuable book about New Testament words, Professor Barclay writes that a person who has this quality knows "when to relax the law under the compulsion of a force that is higher and greater than law". He also draws attention to Trench's comment that this word "expresses that moderation which recognizes the impossibility that cleaves to formal law".

How then was Jesus 'gentle to the people he met? It is worth noting that Matthew chapters 5-7 in the Sermon on the Mount he states the Law of the Kingdom. In those sayings, Jesus gives ethical demands which go far beyond the commandment of the old covenant given through Moses. As the Lord left the site of the "Sermon on the Mount" he is confronted with a man with leprosy. The dreaded disease was one which separated the sufferers from the rest of society. The requirements of Leviticus 13 were strict and brought exclusion from all religious, social and family gatherings. Leprosy was widespread from antiquity according to Rendle Short and Israel had a more sensitive code of hygiene practice than any other nation. Practice of the Levitical law concerning leprosy continued into the Christian era and during the Middle Ages the priests often read the burial service over those suffering from the disease. They were as good as dead! It was therefore astonishing that a man with this disease should approach Jesus without hesitation. He must have been acquainted in some way with Jesus' kindness. The man's attitude was respectful but trusting. He didn't demand attention but was confident that Jesus could heal him. The Lord did not prolong the man's agony any longer but filled with compassion for him, reached out to touch him. This in itself would have a wonderful healing affect on the diseased man's mind, already so injured by the way he had been treated. Some have objected to the idea that Jesus

would touch the man while he still had leprosy because that would be breaking the Law. It is argued that the disease must have been cured before Jesus made contact with the man's skin. Campbell Morgan supports this view. But to explain away the situation like that loses some of the wonder of Jesus' work among ailing folk. It is parallel to Jesus' assertion that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. It was God's covenant love which gave the Law for human benefit, not just for the sake of making people keep rules. The laws about leprosy had been lovingly prescribed to help Israel's society understand the need for hygiene and the danger of infection, thus preventing the spread of the disease. Leprosy was the result of man's sin, not the desire of an implacable god to cause suffering. Jesus was doing good not harm when he touched the leprosy man. He knew the disease had no power over him. Symbolically, he was reaching out to humanity to save them from their wrong doing. By touching the man, Jesus was not defying the Law and he demonstrated this by telling the man to go and show himself to the priest. This is one example of how Jesus was able to rise above Law, Praise God, there have been those who have followed Jesus, like Paul Brand, who have reached out the hand of love to the sufferer with leprosy. Here clearly is an example of the "mind of Christ" an attitude which must be in those who follow Him. This was Jesus' gentleness "epieikes" in action.

Fairly early in Jesus' ministry he reached out in a different way to invite a tax collector to become a disciple (Matt. 9). Law abiding Jews were very antagonistic towards their countrymen who became public servants of Roman administration. They regarded them in much the same way as Quislings were viewed during the Second World War; traitors to Israel. It is doubtful if religious Jews could really make a charge against them stick, on the basis of Moses' Law, except that these men were notorious for cheating by making people pay more taxes than Rome demanded. Thus they were branded thieves and liars. Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, admitted this, when Jesus visited the wealthy city of Jericho (Luke 19). Both of these men were descendants of Abraham and in need of help. Such help was not forthcoming from men whose chief aim was to make everyone keep the Law in a way they believed they kept it themselves. They were bent on watching whether others would fail in minute detail, and had no intention of reaching out to souls that were sick. Jesus reminded them of Hosea's words as they adversely commented on his eating with 'lawbreakers', "*I desired mercy and not sacrifice.*" The word mercy is the same as in Micah 6: 8 (LXX). Jesus truly fulfilled the Law by searching for sinners, to win them to himself by recognizing potential repentance and goodness and offering compassion that could forgive and make whole. He was successful in healing minds and bodies because he approached gently rather than critically. The book of Hosea is a commentary on the word 'epieikes'.

As He went on his way in response to Jairus' plea to heal his daughter, Jesus was touched by a woman who had suffered a disease for a long time and which should have excluded her from mingling in such crowds as thronged around Him. Again Jesus' whole approach to this woman was extremely sensitive. He did not upbraid her for being there in her condition, nor did he criticize her for a superstitious act as some might have done. "*Daughter, your faith has healed you,*" he said and so declared to all that she now had as much right as anyone to be present in that crowd. Jostled by unfeeling people who did not recognize Him, Jesus knew at once when one had reached out in faith to Him and His response was both tender and comforting.

He went on to the synagogue ruler's house. He was entering the home of one who might have sought to exclude Him from a place of worship. Jesus heard the reassuring words "*Don't be*



afraid; just believe and she will be healed." It would have been impossible to make that intimate moment of restoration to the parents in quietness and peace if the wailing mourners had been present. There is no thought of dramatic demonstration in raising the dead. Only the desire to reunite the family, with a practical suggestion that the little girl was naturally hungry. As with the raising of the Nain widow's son, Jesus had no fear of touching the dead man or that upon which he lay. Every act is characterized by gentleness and humility. (Luke 8).

In John's gospel, chapter 8, there is an account of a woman brought to Jesus, because she had been caught in the act of adultery. While accepting that this story appears to be out of place in John 8 or even in John's gospel at all, most scholars now recognize its value in the Gospel tradition. "Few doubt that it is a genuine incident in Jesus life" and are "of the opinion its authenticity is stamped upon its character" to quote just two of them. Should any feel that it is wrong to quote John 7:53 --- 8:11, the accounts of Jesus conversation with the Samaritan women in John 4 or the woman in Simon the Pharisees house in Luke 7 adequately reflect the same sensitive manner of dealing with people in that position.

The teachers of the law who brought the woman to Jesus (John 8:3) probably did so because they were trying to trap him into breaking the Law of Moses by defending the woman or defying Roman law by agreeing to the death penalty. Only Rome could deal with capital crime. As on other occasions Jesus avoided breaking any law and showed that the real 'law breakers' were those "models of false piety", the lawyers themselves, who didn't care who they hurt. It has been suggested that the only person present who had the right to throw stones was Jesus himself-- the only one there who had totally kept the Law in every respect since birth. Jesus addresses the alleged criminal by "woman" -- a name used for his own mother as well as others. This in itself was a mark of respect. He gently warns her to go and sin no more. Jesus does not tell the poor soul that she could do as she liked. He knows the value of good rules. He also knows that "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*"; and that gentleness and patience is the best way of winning such hearts for God. Jesus knew that when religious men stood people in the dock and labeled them guilty, the society those men had created was the real criminal. It was they who must ultimately appear at the bar of their own consciences before the Judge of all the Earth. Those who hope some day to "judge the world" must take note of the way Jesus handled such cases and follow his example now.

Our Lord had been the one who had cried out to the crowds "*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls, For my yoke is easy and my burden is light*" Not long after he had said this and following one of those sad confrontations about healing on the Sabbath, Matthew recalls the words of Isaiah "*He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the street. A bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out till he leads justice to victory.*" (Matt. 11:28, 29; 13:19, 20). No wonder all peoples of the Earth will put their hope in Him. "*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father*". All this because He didn't grab equality, allowed others to treat him like a slave and humbled himself in total obedience to death on a cross. To be with Him, we must be like Him, and have his attitude towards everyone.

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## WAITING

*"The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God"* (Rom. 8:14 RSV).

This is one of those statements which can only be understood when it is accepted that God is actively working in history to bring about a desired consummation which is yet future. There is nothing static about such a statement; it does not define a condition of life or society which can be expected to remain the same generation after generation into infinity. Here is a plain indication of *"that far-off Divine event, to which the whole creation moves"*. Man, says Paul in this noteworthy passage, is at present subject to futility. There will be no disagreement or dispute as to that. One day future, he also says, men will be set free from this bondage and obtain liberty. The verse above quoted equates that desirable end with the "Revealing of the sons of God". To anyone acquainted with Scripture terminology this can only refer to the manifestation of the Christian Church to all mankind "in glory" at the consummation of the Age ("end of the world" in common parlance) in association with the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent at which time He puts into operation the second stage of the Divine Plan for human development -- the rule of righteousness. This doctrine and expectation finds no favor with quite a few serious Christians who feel more impressed with the claims for orderly evolution of the human society toward Christian ideals than for the catastrophic or authoritarian intervention of God Most High to save men from their own folly, but the doctrine is a true one nevertheless. The fact must be faced, now in this Twentieth Century, that man, after thousands of years on this planet and possessed of marvelous powers of perception and invention, is creating problems of survival far faster than he is solving them and the end can only be disaster unless God intervenes. It remains now for the Church of today to rise to its destiny and be worthy of being thus "revealed" when the time comes.

A.O.H.

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## **THE WISDOM OF ELIHU**

*A study in Job 32 -- 37*

### **1. A Young Man Speaks**

A.O.HUDSON

The discourse of Elihu on the supremacy and character of God occupies six chapters in the Book of Job, six chapters of the most remarkably cogent reasoning. It stands in marked contrast to the materialistic philosophies of Job's other three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Twenty-eight chapters of the book are taken up with the debates of these three with Job, hazarding theory after theory to account for the enigma of a righteous man suffering adversity without apparent justification. None of them satisfied Job; "*miserable comforters are ye all*" was his bitter comment. It seems that every possible philosophy had been advanced, every school of thought its thesis put forward, but none furnished the answer. Then did the younger man, Elihu, who up to that point had played the part of a silent listener to the discussion, break into the conversation with his contribution. The distinguishing feature of that contribution is that Elihu brings in the relationship of God to Job, and contends for the fixed principle that God is all-wise, all-just, all-loving, all-powerful, working to a set purpose, and doeth all things well. His argument is not a fatalistic one, not a plea for passive acceptance because it is impossible to do anything else. It is a call to co-operation with God and a willing participation in what God is doing to the extent that human powers allow, in recognition that even though much of the affairs of life are mysterious and difficult to understand, the fact that God is in control and pursuing His intended course is a guarantee that all will eventually be well.

The importance of this to the Christian lies in the fact that the Book of Job is a dramatic representation of the human race, submerged in suffering, afflicted by the many aspects of sin which exist in the world, despairing in face of the apparent indifference of God and without hope that things will ever be any better. The philosophies of the three friends represent all that human philosophy has to offer by way of explanation or comfort. The insight of Elihu pictures the evangel which comes from God by the ministry of those who are the messengers of God. If only for that reason, these six chapters of the Book of Job constitute a study of absorbing interest.

The setting of the Book is in patriarchal times, somewhere between those of Abraham and Moses. The land of Uz was the terrain, now desert, then fertile, lying between the Jordan and Euphrates, where Arab peoples, the descendants of Shem, roamed and mingled as nomadic tribes. Eliphaz the Temanite was a descendant of Abraham through Esau; Bildad the Shuhite through Abrahams wife Keturah. Of Job himself no indication of ancestry is given but he was evidently of the same general stock. Elihu could trace his line back to Nahor the brother of Abraham. We are given therefore a picture of Semitic tribesmen at the time the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and therefore somewhere about sixteen centuries before Christ.

There is every reason for thinking that Elihu was an historic personage, that he did live at about the time above indicated and that the conversations recorded in the Book of Job actually took place. It is possible, even probable, that the entire Book was written by Elihu. The only place in

which the first person is used, apart from quotation speeches, is in Chapter 32: 16, where Elihu speaks of himself to the reader. Since he was the one who did the most listening throughout the discussions he was probably the best qualified to report what was said. And the fact, asserted by scholars, that the words of Elihu are more strongly marked by Aramaic forms of speech than those of any of the other speakers is strong incidental evidence that the book does describe actual happenings, as Elihu, a descendant of Nahor the ancestor of the Aramaic people would certainly speak a dialect distinctive in that respect from the others.

So Elihu embarks upon his discourse. At first, in chapter 23, he commences by introducing himself and justifying his intervention (verses 1 to 14) then goes on to remark the astonishment of his seniors at his temerity (verses 15 to 22). After this his discourse falls naturally into four sections, each clearly marked by an opening phrase inviting attention. Job Chapter 33 speaks of the *Wisdom* of God, wisdom exemplified in Creation (verses 1 to 7), revelation of Himself to man, (verses 8 to 18), that although the curse of sin must lead to death God has provided a means of escape from death (verses 19 to 28) so that the original Divine ideal and purpose is achieved at last; Job must take heed to this fact (verses 29 to 33). Chapter 34 describes the *Justice* of God, and in verses 1 to 4 Elihu appeals for justice in our thinking, that while Job insisted on his own virtue (5 to 9) Elihu must insist on the inherent justice of God's ways (10 to 12) governing righteously, judging impartially and swiftly (13-37). From this he passes to the *Love* of God in chapters 35 and 36 up to verse 21. God has infinite patience with men (*Job 35:1-16*) men are disciplined now by his love but are ultimately to inherit fullness of joy (*Job 36:1-12*), even although those who are impervious to Divine love must suffer the wages of their sin (*Job 13-14*). Job therefore is exhorted to trust in God's love rather than in his own appeal to God for justice (15-21). Finally comes Elihu's eulogy on the *Power* of God, in chapter 36:22-33 and chapter 37. He stresses the insignificance of man compared with Divine greatness (22-26) and launches upon a description of the powers of Nature as illustrative of the power of God (*Job 37:10-12*). But these agents of His power are themselves agents of His work for mankind and have some direct bearing upon man's relation to God (13-18), So man is speechless before God; he can only bow his head and accept the revelation. For this reason men reverence him (19-24).

So Elihu supersedes all the explanations offered by the three friends with the categorical assertion that there is no explanation. Job's adversity can only be seen against the background of God's eternal purpose and Job must accept the fact that whatever God has permitted is an integral part of that purpose and will eventually be seen in complete harmony with the wisdom, the justice, the love and the power of God. In a very real sense Elihu anticipated the Apostle Paul when he said *"now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known"*. Elihu in the Old Testament, just like Paul in the New, had attained a very clear understanding of the "whole counsel of God". With scarcely concealed impatience the younger man waited until his elders had finished speaking. The three of them, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, had spent a long time advancing their theories as to the reason for their friend Job's disastrous afflictions, but had succeeded in convincing neither Job nor themselves. *"They had found no answer"* says the narrative *"yet had condemned Job"* (*Job 32:3*). Elihu's indignation was kindled against them, but not against them only. His resentment was directed also to Job, because he *"justified himself rather than God"* (32:2). It is clear that Elihu was profoundly dissatisfied with the result of the discussions, and felt that he must put his own point of view before them even although, in that day and age, such intrusion by a young man upon the deliberation of the aged and mature would be considered the height of impertinence.

Elihu nevertheless observed the courtesies. *"Now Elihu had waited until Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then was his wrath kindled"* (Job 32:4, 5). He was indignant, finding that these men who by reason of age and experience could reasonably be expected to understand and express the relation of God's purposes to the immediate problem before them should prove woefully ignorant when put to the test. *"I am young"*, he said, *"and ye are very old; wherefore"* (as the Septuagint has it) *"I was fearing to declare to you my own knowledge. I said "Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom "* (Job 32:6-7). Now, in a moment, he finds that mere accession of years does not of itself confer true wisdom, and length of days is not necessarily a qualification for dispensing the word of life to those who need it. There is something else, something far more vital, that does not depend upon the attainment of a goodly tally of years. *"It is the spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty, which giveth them understanding"* (Job 32:8 Leeser). Here is a truth which is not fully recognized in many quarters today. All too often it is assumed that the wisdom and understanding which God imparts to men relates exclusively to matters theological. That is simply not true. Just as the life of man depends upon God, so does the whole of man's intellectual power and mental perception derive from God and can only be eternally sustained by the maintenance of a link with God. The wise men of today, exulting in the marvelously rapid increase in scientific achievement characteristic of this century, do not stop to reflect that the discovery and formulation of those physical and mechanical and electrical laws and principles upon which their achievements are based was the work of intellectual giants among men, during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who themselves were for the most part sincere and avowed believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ. From Sir Isaac Newton onwards, these men pursued their work in the belief that they were working hand in hand with God, uncovering his secrets for the benefit of humanity. The impetus of those centuries may carry us forward a few more generations, increasingly without God, but the penalty will ultimately be paid. Already medical men are beginning to remark that despite the apparently greater knowledge and ability of today, the level of average intelligence is beginning to fall. The average man is tending to get less brainy than his forebears, suggest some observers.

So Elihu gives voice to the scathing rebuke which is in his head. *"Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged (necessarily) understand judgment"* (Job 32:9). From the dawn of history the aged in years have arrogated to themselves the prerogatives of rulership and direction, claiming that by virtue of their longer experience they are the best fitted to rule and direct. The younger in each generation have chafed and complained, impotent to alter matters, until they in their turn, have behaved in precisely the same fashion toward the next generation following them. So it has been and is; so it will be; until the weak, vacillating rule of man gives place to the administration of our Lord Jesus Christ who will not only render to every man according to his deeds but will also give each man, young or old, full scope for the useful employment of the ability and knowledge he possesses. But that lies in the future; Elihu, more than three millenniums before our own time, is left fulminating against the elderly men whose pretensions to wisdom and knowledge of God he had exposed for the hollow shams that they were.

So Elihu takes the situation into his own hands and demands attention. *"Therefore I said Harken to me: I also will shew mine opinion"* (Job 32:10). It is evident that Elihu had thought long and earnestly over the problem of Job's adversity. Unlike the three friends, he is in no doubt as to the right answer. There is no pseudo-philosophical reasoning, no sententious discourse, no high-sounding speech, as with them. His words are straightforward and to the point, the

utterances of a man who knows whereof he speaks and is not afraid to voice his knowledge. But before doing so he lashes the three older men with words which leave no room for doubt as to the contempt in which he holds their failure to achieve their object. *"Behold, I waited for your words, I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say"*-- one can sense the bitter irony of his voice in that last phrase, eloquently defining the floundering of the would-be comforters as they desperately sought for a satisfactory exposition of the case from the stores of their own philosophies -- *"yea, I attended unto you, and behold there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words; (so that ye cannot say) we have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man"* (Job 32:11-13). There is the indictment; after all the portentous speeches and flowery language, Elihu's pungent comment brands with failure the entire session. None had explained the mystery. None solved the problem. None satisfied Job. The position remained as it was at the beginning.

The answer was so simple, after all. Expressed in few words, it was, *"God thrusteth him down, not man"*. The source and meaning of all Job's adversity was to be found in the inscrutable purpose of God, and it was there that the three wise men had not thought to look. The expression *"lest ye should say"* in verse 13 is based in the Hebrew word *"pen"* which is difficult to translate lucidly but carries the meaning of an opposing alternative. Because the wise men had espoused a philosophy which was a false one, they were automatically precluded from discerning or expounding the true. Elihu tells them that notwithstanding their superior age and claim to consequent wisdom, they simply did not know what they were talking about. So in verse 14 he makes plain that he has no intention of endorsing their standpoint or repeating any of the arguments they have used. *"He (Job) hath not engaged with me in debate: neither will I answer him with your reasonings"* (Job 32:14)

At this point the narrator passes from speaking in the third person to the first person. Up to verse 14 the writer records the speech of Elihu, referring to him in the third person; *"Elihu had waited. . . Elihu saw ... Elihu... said 'I am young'"* etc. But now in verse 15 to 17 there is a change and the writer indicates that he himself is the Elihu of whom he speaks. It is this short passage which seems to mark Elihu himself as the writer of these chapters and probably the entire Book of Job. Having finished the record of introductory speech, which runs from verse 6 to 14, he comments of the three older men, *"they were amazed, they answered no more, they left off speaking"* (Job 32:12). Astonished at his temerity, the three men abruptly broke off the discussion and, probably, looked at Elihu with some indignation. There must have been more than indignation though; something of the inward conviction that Elihu possessed, in consequence of his deeper knowledge of God, told them that here was a factor with which they had not reckoned. Here was a man who saw through their shallow reasoning and outworn platitudes and would brook nothing but a clear statement of truth based upon the revelation of the wisdom of God. Where the three had relied upon human intellect and worldly-wise reasoning this man looked for, and experienced, the leading of the Holy Spirit. Like a far more sublime figure yet to come into the world, he spoke as one having authority, and these three who in that ancient world partook much of the character and outlook of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's day became suddenly conscious that one stood in their midst whom they had not previously known. They were silent, for in the presence of that burning sincerity of conviction they had nothing to say.

*"When I had waited"* says Elihu *"(for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more) I said, I also will show mine opinion. For I am full of discourse, the spirit in my bosom presseth*

*me in*" (Job 32:16-18). That latter sentence is Rotherham's rendering. It expresses, so much more succinctly than the A.V., the burning vehemence with which Elihu felt he must deliver his message. At all costs he must say those things which God had given him to say. Like Jeremiah a few centuries later, *"his word was a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay"*. Elihu felt like that; he must overthrow all the accepted customs of convention and decorum, outrage the respectability of his elders and cry defiance at all their philosophies, heedless alike of the effect upon them or the consequence to himself if only he might unburden himself of the word which glowed within him like an imprisoned light. Many a modern evangelist has felt like that and many a modern evangelistic message has battered against surprised society with the same impact.

The crudeness of verse 19 in the A.V.. *"my belly is as wine which hath no vent "*, a crudeness to the twentieth century but quite normal English when the A.V. was prepared four hundred years ago. It is best softened by adopting Rotherham's translation *"Lo! my bosom is like wine not opened. Like new wine-skins it will burst. I will speak that I may more freely breathe. I will open my lips and respond. "* (Job 32:19-20). Only by the delivery of his message could the young prophet feel at ease. How he had chafed against the restraint imposed by his submission to listening to the debate, the frustration of knowing that his own knowledge of God told him better than these men knew, and yet they would not heed. There is no evidence that they ever did heed. The silence which fell upon the company when Elihu made his impassioned outburst was apparently continued after he had finished, for there is no record of any reply or refutation on the part of the three. When Elihu has finished speaking it is the Almighty who intervenes to conclude that discussion. So Elihu was like any other young man who is filled with a consuming desire to put his elders right on matters in which he is certain they grievously err, but with the difference that, whereas in many cases the young man is himself inexperienced and immature and his exhortation is characterized more by zeal than by knowledge, in this instance Elihu was solidly instructed by his deep pondering over the principles of God's government, and when he spoke it was truly the Holy Spirit speaking through him.

Elihu aims his final shaft. With the impassioned sincerity of the man who has but one ideal, to be a messenger and interpreter of God despite the consequences, he takes his stand. *"Let me be partial to no man, and unto no son of earth give flattering titles. Surely I know not how to give flattering titles; how soon might my maker take me away"* (Job 32:21,22). This again is Rotherham's rendering. It is as much a prayer as a declamation, almost as though he prays God for strength to deliver his message without fear or partiality, caring nothing for the praise or blame of men, only that he might speak out loud the word God has given him to speak. He cares not for the opinion his hearers have of him or the attitude they manifest toward him, or presumably the treatment they might afterwards mete out to him. All of this is as nothing to him. He is God's prophet, an instrument in God's hand, and like Paul in later times it is *"woe unto me if I preach not the gospel"*. Overshadowing all he thinks and says and does is the consciousness of his responsibility to God and the power of God over his life. *"How soon might my Maker take me away"* he says. That is the sublime thought with which he ends this introductory outburst. He has life and ability and a message to which that life and that ability must be devoted while as yet he has the opportunity. His life is in God's hands and in the inscrutable purposes of God he might be taken away at any moment; to Elihu very definitely it was, *"now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation"* and he meant to utter his message and discharge his commission there and then, though in the next instant the heavens fall about him.

(To be continued)

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## **THE RANSOM FOR ALL**

### *A Study Paper on Christian Doctrine*

A.O.HUDSON

The human race has been in bondage to sin and death since the Fall. No man has been able to escape. *"We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin: as it is written There is none righteous, no, not one . . . for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Rom. 3: 9-23). Our first parents were created perfect and capable of everlasting life so long as they remained in harmony with Divine law (Gen. 1:27-29; 2: 15-17), but in consequence of their lapse into sin the processes of death commenced to work in them. *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground. . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Gen. 3:19; 2:17). All human beings subsequently born were born in a dying condition of dying parents. *"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... therefore by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ... for by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. "* (Rom. 5:12-19). No man was or is able to redeem any of his fellows from this unhappy condition. *"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. "* (Psa. 49:7-9). But God promised our first parents, at the very time of their fall, that a way of deliverance would be found eventually. Speaking to the instigator of man's sin. He said *"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head ...."* (Gen. 3:15). This theme, that the seed of the woman would become the means of recovering man from the power of sin and evil, runs right through the Scriptures. Abraham, several thousands of years later, was told *"I will make of thee a great nation and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12:2-3) and later *"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 22:18). The Apostle Paul explained the meaning of this when he said *"Christ hath redeemed us... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through faith. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made not to seeds as of many; but as of one 'and to thy seed which is Christ"* (Gal. 3:13-17).

It will be noted that in the text just quoted there are two things necessary before the blessing can be conferred. One is faith and the other is redemption. And redemption comes first. A Redeemer is necessary to recover mankind from condemnation to death on account of sin. So Elihu the friend of Job says, speaking of man's plight, *"His soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger (ambassador) with him, to shew unto man his uprightness, then he (God) is gracious unto him, and saith 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.' His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth."* (Job 33:22-25). That is a Millennial promise; it is paralleled by the declaration of Peter on the day of Pentecost *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things".* (Acts 3:19-21). That time was spoken of by Isaiah when he cried *"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"* (Isa. 35:10). That this is to include the



abolition of death and mankind's entry into everlasting life is indicated by the emphatic declaration *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction."* (Hos. 13:14).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the ransom price which achieves this grand purpose. *"The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."* (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Jesus Himself said *"The Son of Man came... to give his life a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:45). This word "ransom" means "a corresponding price" or more properly "a price to set against" and used in this connection it alludes to the process known in New Testament times as "manumission", by means of which Greek and Roman slaves could obtain their freedom. Someone had to pay into one of the pagan temple treasuries the price of the slave's release. A friend of the slave, willing to make the financial sacrifice, could do this. Then the slave went to the temple and the price was paid over to his former master and the former slave became technically the property of the god. By virtue of that fact he became actually free, for whilst he continued the slave of the god no one could touch him. Adam had forfeited his life because of sin and had become the slave of sin. The price paid for his release was the perfect life which our Lord Jesus gave on the Cross, thereby providing the price which at one and the same time released man from the Adamic condemnation and at the same time made him the property of God. So Paul says *"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived (lived) that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living."* (Rom. 14:9). *"He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price: be not ye the servants of men. (1 Cor. 7:22-23). "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."* (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

This fact of our having been "bought by means of a "ransom-price" is therefore a very real thing, and we Christians are in consequence the servants, bond slaves, of Christ; a servitude which is, paradoxically enough, perfect liberty. The price paid was the human life of Jesus, often referred to in the New Testament as the "blood" of Christ. The Jews had always been taught that *"the life is in the blood"* (Lev. 17:14) and it was a perfectly natural thing therefore to be told that they had been *"redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ."* (1 Pet. 2:18-19). Drawing an analogy with the Tabernacle ceremonies of older times, the writer to the Hebrews says *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal deliverance for us."* (Heb. 9:12). *"Thou wast slain"* rings the heavenly chorus in the "Throne Scene" of the Book of Revelation *"and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood"* (Rev. 5:9). John himself in his prologue to the same book declares of Christ that He *"washed us from our sins in his own blood"* (Rev. 1:5). Paul adds his testimony when, writing to the Ephesians, he says of Christ *"In whom we have deliverance through his blood"* (Eph. 1:7), and to the Colossians that he *"made peace through the blood of his cross"* and would in consequence be the means of reconciling all things to God (Col. 1:20); finally to the Romans that *"being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* (Rom. 5:9).

Justification by faith in Christ is granted by God on the basis of the ransom given by Christ and the faith of the believer in that ransom. But this is a different subject and will not be enlarged upon here. Suffice to notice that this justification constitutes a "redemption" or "deliverance" from the bondage of sin in this present time and results in actual deliverance from death when the due time has come for that deliverance. Hence the ransom given by Jesus is often referred to as the means of our redemption. (The words rendered "redemption" in the New Testament have the meaning of being set free, and are usually better translated by our English word

"deliverance".) So Job was able to say with confidence *"I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"* (Job 19:25), and the angel to Joseph *"Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matt. 1:21). The Apostles, preaching at Pentecost, made it plain that *"there is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Paul, writing to the Galatian Christians emphasized that *"when the fullness of the times was come, God, sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* (Gal. 4:4-5). The fact that Christ gave his own human life to effect this redemption is stressed in the preceding chapter: *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse (cutting-off) of the Law, being made a curse (being cut off) for us."* (Gal. 3:13). He came deliberately for that purpose, as He himself testified *"the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost"* (Matt. 18:11). *"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world"* (John 12:47). *"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."* (Luke 9:56). To that is added the emphatic words of His greatest Apostle, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"* (1 Tim.1:15) and his reminder to Titus *"Our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity."* (Titus 2:14).

So far we have spoken only of the death of Jesus on the Cross as providing the ransom, but nothing of the outcome. In his instructions to the Christians at home, Paul says *"if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom. 5:10). Something more than the death of the Savior is involved; there is also His resurrection. *"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved."* (Rom. 10:9). Had Jesus been nothing more than a man of Adam's race, even though a perfect man, he must have remained in the grave, his life given forever on behalf of mankind. But His was a life that came from above; before the world was created, He lived (John 6:38; John 6:51; John 8:58; Prov. 8:22) and, on the third day after the human body had been taken down from the Cross and laid in the garden grave, he rose again in the power of an endless life and took again the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, the glory that he had laid aside for the suffering of death. *"His mighty power"* says Paul *"which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand"* (Eph. 1:20). The humanity of Jesus remains forever given as the purchase price for the redeemed, Jesus Himself is forever in possession of His spiritual glory *"far above all things in heaven and earth"*.

Wherein lay the necessity of the death of Jesus? Could not His example, His teaching and His influence do for man what was necessary? He gave the answer to that question Himself *"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."* (John 12: 24). In God's wisdom He saw that only by taking the sinners place even unto death would Christ be able to win men from the other side of death. *"I am the good shepherd",* said Jesus, *"and I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again."* (John 10:15-18). Perhaps Peter explains that cryptic utterance when he says *"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) in the spirit."* (1 Pet. 3:18). That at any rate introduces us to one of the deepest themes in the Bible, the redemptive power of suffering. We may not know just how it is that suffering borne on behalf of others creates a power that saves, but the Bible is clear that it is so. The 53rd Chapter of Isaiah is well known for its description of the sufferings of Christ Jesus; *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . He hath borne*

*our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: ... he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter... he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.-- he hath poured out his soul unto death;--- and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* (Isa. 53:3-12). Explaining this very passage to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus told them *"Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day"* (Luke 24: 46), and again *"O...slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"* (Luke 24:25, 26). Later on Peter recalled those words when he spoke of the Spirit in the prophets testifying beforehand *"the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow"* (1 Pet. 1:11). The writer to the Hebrews had a clear vision of this matter; he says *"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels (i.e. made man) for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man... forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. . . ,for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted".* (Heb. 2:9-18). *"In the days of his flesh. . . though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. "* (Heb. 5:7-9). Peter again rejoins with continuing testimony *"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example . . . who in his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree (the Cross) . . . by whose stripes ye are healed"* (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Paul, preaching to the Thessalonians, *reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must need have suffered, and risen again from the dead"* (Acts 17:3).

It is in consequence of this understanding, that the sufferings and death of Jesus constitute the power behind mankind's eventual reconciliation to God, that the Apostle John declares *"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (I John 2:2) and Paul, writing to the Romans *"God hath set forth (Jesus) to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past."* (Rom. 3:25). This word "propitiation" has certain pagan associations which give it the meaning of sacrifice as upon a pagan altar, but the original word used means "a covering", and it referred to the covering over of sins so that they no longer appear in the sight of God. There is no thought here of a kind of blood sacrifice demanded to appease an angry God; that idea is quite inconsistent with the Scriptural presentation of the Father, the God of love, working in complete amity and harmony with the Son. The idea is rather that expressed in Psa. 32:1 and quoted by Paul in Rom. 4:7 *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered"* and Psa. 85:2 *"Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin."* God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, says *"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions. and... thy sins."* (Isa. 44:22).

Jesus Christ came from above and assumed human form to give Himself a Ransom for All, because only through the avenue of suffering and death could the Divine purpose be effected. Jesus is Lord of all and in His resurrection life He had both authority and power, born of His experiences on earth, to lead whosoever will of all mankind back to reconciliation to God.

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## **AND GOD REPENTED**

*Enquiry into a perplexing subject*

A. O. HUDSON

The assertion, some eight times repeated, that God "repented" of something that He had done has often given rise to the question of what is implied. Common sense dictates that it is impossible for the Creator of all things, having all knowledge and foresight, to regret his action in some specific instance and wish it had not been so done. "*With him is no variableness neither shadow of turning.*" is James comment on God's ways (Jas. 1:17). The fact that we cannot think of this "repentance" of God in just the same way as we understand the term which nowadays has for the most part a theological significance and signifies repentance for past sin is evidenced by the words of Ballam in Num. 23:19 "*God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it?*" God is all-wise and omniscient: He is in full control of the creation He has brought into being. It is inconceivable that He can ever be in the position of wishing that He had not done something which He has done.

If this be conceded, it remains to consider what is implied by the several occasions on which it is said that God "repented".

The foremost example and the first --- is at the time of the Flood, when "*God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart*" (Gen. 6:5-6). The common view of this text is that God regretted having created mankind and resolved to destroy them as unfit for further life. That this view cannot possibly be true is evidenced by the fact that at a much earlier period, in the days of Eden, God had told the first human pair that He proposed eventually to undo the harm that had been done by the advent of sin, that there would be a savior from among those yet to be born of their descendants. This presupposes that God envisaged the presence of mankind on the earth long after the Flood had come and gone.

In these circumstances, the first thing to do is look at the word for which the A.V. (and earlier) translators selected "repent" as the English equivalent. '*Nacham* ', like many Hebrew words, has a variety of meanings, largely determined by the grammatical class, whether passive, active, intensive, and so on, most of which is beyond the comprehension of any but competent Hebrew scholars and will not be enlarged upon here. Suffice to say that the general use of the word in all the Scriptures, with whatever English words it is translated, is the best guide. In this particular case the word is derived from the idea of drawing in the breath in order to contain one's grief. Hence in the O.T. its meaning is to lament or grieve over something that has happened, (48 times), to grieve on account of a person or persons -- to pity (twice) to comfort others or oneself (45 times), to be comforted (8 times). Of all these the A.V. translates the word by "repent" 41 times and "comfort" 61 times, and on one occasion (Isa. 1:24) "I will *ease* me of mine adversaries".

That such divergent ideas as repentance and comfort can be presented as the meaning of the same Hebrew word only underlines the difficulties faced by translators. To some extent, of

course, theological beliefs and human standards of conduct must have their influence. It could be very difficult to see how God could take comfort in the state of affairs before the Flood; much more understandable to think that God, in his grief was sorry He had ever made man and wished He had not done so, which is how the NLB. put it "*He was sorry that he had made man on earth. ... I am sorry that I ever made them*". But when in the account of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah, it is said (Gen. 24:67) that "*Isaac was comforted after his mother's death*", where "comforted" is the same word "nacham" it is obviously incongruous to suggest that he repented of his action in marrying Rebekah, so "comfort" was the English word used. Likewise Judah was "comforted" in Gen. 38:12, David in 2 Sam. 13:39, Rachel "*refused to be comforted*" for her lost children in Jer. 31:15. All these and other examples, in the same passive form of the verb as in Gen. 6:5-6. Many more in the active sense include Gen. 5:29 where Lamech says of Noah "*this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil...*" which hardly includes the idea of repentance; Gen. 37:35 where Jacob's sons "*rose up to comfort him*" at the loss of Joseph; Job. 2:11, Job's three friends came "*to mourn with him and to comfort him*"; Psa. 23:4 "*thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*;" Isa. 61:2 "*to comfort all that mourn*". Zech. 1:17 "*the Lord shall yet comfort Zion*". There are many more examples: these are sufficient.

From all this it would appear that the Divine repentance "at the time of the flood was a deep personal grief at the fact of human sin because He himself was man's Creator and Father. God grieved at the consequence of his making man, not regretting that He had made man, but regretting the sorry state of affairs which had resulted. The Septuagint says that "God laid it to heart that he had made man on the earth and he pondered it deeply". There is a small grammatical point here; "*chay*" is a relative conjunction "that" and also a relative causal particle "because". The translators have to choose which meaning best fits the sense. If, instead of "that" we say "*God repented because he had made man ... it repenteth me because I made them*" the emphasis changes. God grieved for the sinful state of man because He had been responsible for their creation in the first place, and so, to bring in the New Testament, was in the position of the father in the parable of the prodigal son. There was no suggestion of reversing His plans for this earth and destroying it forever, but there is the plain statement of what God would do to deal with the situation. He declared, in short, that He would alter the course of history, for man's own sake. The human society upon earth was altogether corrupt; if tradition be true, the terse words of Genesis 6 constitute a masterly understatement of the position. Violence and murder were the order of the day; in the expressive words of the Book of Enoch, "*as men perished, they cried, and their cry went up to heaven*" (1 Enoch 8:4). So God determined to take away all that generation and make a new start.

It was a merciful decision. There is a future for all of them. They will come back in the resurrection to a far happier state of society than the one they knew, and be able to hear of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much later on, God acted similarly in the case of the perhaps equally corrupt people of Sodom and Gomorrah. "*I took them away as I saw fit*" He said.

On a subsequent occasion God told Samuel "*it repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me.*" (1 Sam. 15:10-11) The decision grieved Samuel "*and he cried unto the Lord all night*". Could it have been a matter of less grief to God himself? He had chosen Saul and presented him to the people, and Saul, at first so full of promise, had defected and shown himself unworthy. Here surely is another case where God was compelled to change the course of events but did so with grief

A different aspect is presented by a number of texts in which God is said to repent of the "*end which he thought to do to his people*" (Exod. 32:14). In each of these cases, about nine or ten in all, the position is that the people of Israel had violated their covenant and apostatized from God, and in accordance with terms of that covenant they were due in consequence to reap trouble and disaster of all kinds--failure of crops, famine, invasion of enemies, and so on. But Israel repented and came back to God so that He lifted the threatened retribution. Perhaps the English word "relent" would be the best to employ in such cases. God relented, not capriciously in an irresponsible fashion, but because the people had fulfilled the conditions necessary for the lifting of the sentence. "*It repented the Lord because of their groanings*" says Judges 2:18. "*If that nation ... turn from their evil / will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them*" (Jer. 18:8). When the inhabitants of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah "*God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not*" (Jon. 3:10).

A rather striking usage of the word is found in Ezek. 5:13. The Lord is talking to Ezekiel about the grave unfaithfulness of Israel and warning of the consequences that must follow. After detailing some of these consequences the Lord says, "*Then shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted*". The word *nacham*, here rendered "comforted" has the implication that God is both sympathetic towards and solicitous for his erring people coupled with satisfaction that the right thing has been done. They have received the treatment which at the last will effect their final reconciliation with God. The same idea occurs in Isa. 40:1-2, "*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her ... that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins*". The same word, *nacham*, certainly not meaning repentance, for her iniquity is now pardoned. but a message of comfort and hope for the future, because God has turned from his chastening and is now commencing to bless.

It has been said that these references to God "repenting" should be understood as His changing his course of action in view of changed circumstances, but not His ultimate intention. Saint Augustine, commenting on Gen. 6:6-7. says that the Divine action was "an unchanged ordering of changeable things. For God repents not of anything He does, as man does" ( "*City of God*" Bk. 15 chap. 23). The reverse of this idea, a change in the direction, is indicated in such expressions as Hos. 13:14 "*O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I shall be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes*". Psa. 110:4 *The Lord hath sworn and will not repent: thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*": Ezek 24:14. "*I the Lord have spoken...I will not go back neither will I spare, neither will I repent*". In such instances the fixity of Divine intention is indicated and probably "relent" is the best word to use.

All in all, it seems that the repentance of God defines his concern at a condition of things existing out of harmony with His will, and his determination to change it, allied with feeling of pity or grief for those affected, yet combined with satisfaction or comfort in the knowledge that in the onward progress of His overall plan all things will yet be well.

## **Serenity**

We all know the almost miraculous effect that one strong poised mind can have over a panic-stricken multitude, how a few calm words and clear authoritative directions will produce an immediate result and reduce confusion to something like order. This influence, which is so obvious on marked occasions, is always felt and leaves its impress everywhere. In quietness and confidence there is always strength. One poised mind has more effect than many restless, uncontrolled ones.

It is well worth while to spend time in cultivating quietness of spirit. It is not until the peace of God garrisons our hearts and thoughts that the world and all belonging to it can be seen in their right proportions, and energy needed for co-operation with God in the working out of His plans is set free. Many mysteries remain, problems are unsolved. We cannot see how all things will be made to work together for good, but we feel that God sees, and we have faith instilled into us to leave all things restfully with Him, and let Him unfold His plans little by little, and show us our share in them. We know that *"He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think"*.

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## **EVENTIDE**

*Reaching a goal*

T. Holmes

It would be a bedraggled travel-stained company which, at length, made its passage along the Appian Way on the last stage of its journey to Rome. It had been a hazardous adventurous journey from Caesarea across the Levantine, and up the Italian coast. Only by the providential care of God, for Paul's own specific sake, had the journey been accomplished free from serious injury and death. At a time when passengers and crew expected to be entombed in a watery grave the angel of the Lord appeared to Paul to strengthen and comfort him, and to assure him that he would, in very deed and truth, stand before Caesar to testify, as the Lord had intended from the onset of his ministry. Additionally the angelic comforter assured him that God had granted him the lives of all those who sailed with him. (Acts 27:24.) Presumably Paul had prayed for his own and his fellow-passengers safe keeping through the stormy darkness, and had been heard. Thus for the Lord's messenger's sake two hundred and seventy-five other lives were spared, and granted safe passage to terra-firma, though apparently with the loss of all they possessed. Even so the Maltese bestowed on them *"unusual kindness"* because it had *"begun to rain and was cold"*. (Acts 28:2).

During this enforced stay among the Maltese people, the Spirit of the Lord, in the heart of Paul, availed itself of the opportunity to repay their generosity by the healing of their sick -- the people on the island who had diseases came and were healed, and without doubt would hear the Word of God proclaimed by Paul as he wrought these kindly acts. It is a touching commentary upon the

native goodness of these islanders when Luke could say of them, "*they presented many gifts to us and when we sailed they put on board whatever we needed*" (Acts 28: 10 RSV). From thence another ship brought them at last to Italian soil. A messenger was immediately dispatched to the brethren in Rome, informing them that Paul and his company had landed at Puteoli, and would soon be en-route again for Rome.

Presumably the tidings of his coming had an electrifying effect among the brethren in Rome, for immediately two contingents of them set out at once, one of which, when they met him, had traveled no less than three and thirty miles, while the other also had come twenty-three -- both of them on foot! And their attitude towards the prisoner, what of that? Imagination must provide the answer here, for "*on seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage.*" Surely, blest was the tie that bound their hearts in Christian love, to produce such an effect as that! As the prisoner's company came alongside the little waiting group, the eyes of Paul would search the faces of each in turn, and recognition would be prompt and mutual. Paul had many friends then resident in Rome -- Priscilla, Aquila, Epaphroditus, Mary, Andronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys and quite a host of other names (see Rom. 16), to whom he had sent love and greetings but a little while before. Who, and how many of this well beloved company had come to meet him on his Romeward way we cannot say; what we can say with complete confidence is that the light of a deep affection would be beaming from every eye. Prisoner though he was, it was as a brother in the Lord that they greeted him.

What a meeting that would be --- love welling up from every heart towards this travel stained and bedraggled prisoner --- and he, giant though he was at heart, found new courage from the out-poured love! How had this warmth of attachment and solicitude come about? How was it that this had come to acquire such a grip upon the hearts of those he met? There is but one answer here -- his absolutely selfless life, a life spent in imitation of the Master whom he served. "Not I, but Christ" was the magnet of their love. *Not I but Christ, be honored, loved, exalted,*

*Not I but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard,*

*Not I but Christ, in every look and action,*

*Not I but Christ, in every thought and word*

Breathes there the desire in any heart to be a rallying center to the fellowship, a nucleus to the group? Let him emulate the man who found that draught of pure joy on the Appian Way! Let him "live" Christ day by day ---- Christ Jesus will do the rest!

Then on the other hand if we may not be called to occupy Paul's place towards the fellowship, let us not forget that not only Paul was the better for that display of love and encouragement --- others, too may thank God and take new courage from it! Seas of trouble may give to others a bedraggled look as we meet them on life's crowded highway, and the light of our eyes and hands may be to them as sweet refreshing wine!

*Play thou a brother's part,*

*Strength, love and hope impart,*

*Bid thou the fainting heart*

*Look up again.*