**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**LEVITICUS-009. THE KINSMAN REDEEMER by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him."*

*Leviticus 25:48*

There are several of the institutions and precepts of the Mosaic legislation which, though not prophetic, nor typical, have yet remarkable correspondences with lofty Christian truth. They may be used as symbols, if only we remember that we are diverting them from their original purpose.

How singularly these words lend themselves to the statement of the very central truths of Christianity--a slavery which is not necessarily perpetual and a redemption effected by a kinsman!

That institution of the Goel is of a very remarkable kind, and throws great light on Christian verities. I wish, in dealing with it, to guard against any idea that it was meant to be prophetic or typical.

**I. The kinsman redeemer under the old law.**

The strength of the family tie in the Israelitish polity was great. The family was the unit--hence there were certain duties devolving on the nearest male relative. These, so far as we are at present concerned, were three.

**(a)** The redemption of a slave. The Mosaic legislation about slavery was very remarkable. It did not nominally prohibit it, but it fenced it round and modified it, so as to make it another thing.

Israelites were allowed to hold Gentile slaves, but under careful restrictions. Israelites were allowed to sell themselves as slaves. If the sale was to Israelites, the slavery was ended in six years or at the jubilee, whichever period came first--unless the slave had his ear bored to the doorpost to intimate his contentment in service (Exod. xxi. 5, 6). This is not slavery in our sense of the word, but only a six years engagement. If sold to a heathen in Israel, then the Goel had to redeem him; and the reason for this was that all Israelites belonged to God.

**(b)** The redemption of an inheritance.

This was the task of the kinsman-goel. The land belonged to the tribe. Pauperism was thus kept off. There could be no submerged tenth. The theocratic reason was, the land shall not be sold at all for ever for it is Mine!

**(c)** The avenging of murder. Blood feuds were thus checked, though not abolished. The remarkable institution of cities of refuge gave opportunity for deliberate investigation into each case. If wilful murder was proved, the murderer was given up to the Goel for retribution; if death had been by misadventure, the slayer was kept in the city of refuge till the high-priest's decease.

This is the germ of the figure of the Redeemer-Kinsman in later Scripture. Notice how higher ideas began to gather round the office. The prophets felt that in some way God was their Goel. In Isaiah the application of the name to Him is frequent and, we might almost say, habitual. So in Psalm xlix. 7, None can be Goel to his brother; verse 15, God will be Goel to my soul from the power of the grave.

Job 19:25, I know that my Goel liveth... .

**II. Our Kinsman-Redeemer.**

The New Testament metaphor of Redemption or buying back with a ransom is distinctly drawn from the Hebrew Goel's office.

Christ is the Kinsman. The brotherhood of Christ with us was voluntarily assumed, and was for the purpose of redeeming His brethren.

He is the Kinsman-Redeemer from slavery,--a slavery which is voluntary. The soul is self-delivered to evil and sin; but blessed be God! this slavery is terminable. The kinship of Christ was needful for our redemption. It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. He thus gave His life a ransom for many. Note the objective value of His atonement, and its subjective power as setting us free.

He is the Kinsman-Redeemer of our inheritance. God is the inheritance here. The manhood of Jesus brings God back to us for our--(a) Knowledge; (b) Love; (c) Possession. Heaven is our inheritance hereafter. His manhood secures it for us. I go to prepare a place for you. An inheritance incorruptible. The redemption of the purchased possession.

The Kinsman-Avenger of blood. It is only in a modified sense that we can transfer this part of the Goel's office to Jesus. The old Kinsman-Avenger of blood avenged it by shedding the shedder's blood in retribution. But that was not the kind of vindication (for Goel means also Vindicator) for which Job looked when he used the expression. Resurrection to the vision of God was to come to him at the last, by the standing of his Goel on the earth, and that was to be the true avenging of his death, and his vindication. The great murderer Death is to die, and his victims are to be wrested from him, and their death be proved to be the means of their fuller life. Precious shall their blood be in His sight, and when their slayer is slain they will live for ever, partakers of their Kinsman-Redeemer's glory, because they had been partakers of His death, and His blood had been precious in their sight. Let us cling to our Kinsman-Redeemer in all our life that He may give us freedom and an inheritance among His brethren, and, closing our eyes in death, we may commend our spirits to the Angel that redeemed us from all evil, and be sure that He will redeem our souls from the power of the grave.