**THE EAGLE LIFE - STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**01. THE BROODING SPIRIT by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."*

*Genesis 1:2*

Some time ago, out on the Atlantic, far beyond the sight of land, I saw a cloud whose outlines took the form of a great bird. Its mighty wings were stretched out so as to touch the two horizons, and it seemed like a mother-bird brooding over the entire deep. I recalled the word in Genesis which I have written above, and the marvellous cloud became to me a symbol of the most real but invisible presence of the Lord brooding over the varied waters of human life. For, indeed, that is the eternal yearning of the mother-heart of God, brooding over all its circumstances, without and within, and to impress everything with the mystic virtues of the Divine breast.

The Divine Spirit would brood over the dancing, frolicsome waters of our joys. And it is the miracle of grace that when the Lord countenances a joy it is strangely enhanced. He adds sunshine to daylight. He transmutes happiness into blessedness. He endows our delights with heavenly virtue. The joy of the Lord becomes our strength. No one has ever tasted really superlative joy until there has brooded over his gladness the transforming and beautifying Spirit of God.

And He will brood over our labour when we are doing our daily business in great waters. He delights to glorify the common lot and common toil. It is His purpose to hallow the commonplace, the vast world of the ordinary in which we earn our daily bread. In "The Angelus,'' in which Millet pictures two peasants, man and woman, standing with bowed heads as the bells of evening send across the fields the call to prayer, the painter has thrown a softening light not only upon the humble worshippers, but also upon the spade and wheelbarrow, the common implements of their toil. And that is right; the Light of Life will illumine the means by which we earn our bread and thereby transform them into a means of grace. When the Great Spirit broods over our business it becomes our Father's business.

And He will brood over the waters of our sorrows. Sometimes these waters roar and are troubled, and many precious things in our lives "shake with the swelling thereof.'' But the brooding Spirit will give us rest when "all without tumultuous seems." We may have the refuge of His bosom "while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high." The waters can do us no hurt so long as we are resting against the bosom of God.

And the same great Spirit will brood over the waters of death. Those waters reveal themselves in different ways to different pilgrims. Sometimes they are very high and overflow their banks. Sometimes they are so shallow that one can almost go over dry shod. But whether the floods are out, or the passage is almost dry, the faithful Spirit broods upon the waters and the soul is kept in perfect peace.

"When I tread the verge of Jordan

Bid my anxious fears subside,

Bear me through the swelling current,

Land me safe on Canaan's side.''