

St. George's,
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The Promise of Redemption

Ex. 6: 2-8, Heb. 11: 17-29, Luk. 13: 5-13.

At certain periods of history in the life of na-
tions and civilisations a person of exceptional
leadership is produced, who through his or her
contribution, makes a remarkable and unfor-
gettable impact. Sometimes such a contribution
changes the whole course of history and events
- as was the case with Moses, the man who
received a vision from God of leading his
people from slavery to freedom. Here was a
man who had received from God a promise
of redemption and who, after initial
failure, eventually transformed that promise
into a glorious reality. In that sense the word
redemption has become
synonymous to the p. of Moses

In the evaluation of the Christian faith
this concept of redemption plays a very im-
portant role. The Church has made it
one of the cor-
nerstones of Christian faith and dogma
as an essential condition for acceptance
of a disciple of Christ - claiming that this
is what Christ requires. I heartily agree
with the interim claim that salvation
and redemption are two essential pre-
quisites for entering the Kingdom of God.

2. but I am ^{not} concerned that we ^{have} ^{in my words} ~~do~~ ^{with} distorted or subverted the original meaning and intent which ~~is~~ ^{both} the history of the O.T. or the N.T. has given to the concepts of salvation and redemption. Anybody listening to the lively and engaging theol. debate on what eq. redemption in the Christian sense emphas, and then comparing the conflicting views on this issue emanating from the Christian community with the essential forms of results of redemption which they produce in actual facts and concrete examples, must at times stand confused and appalled at these results!

Therefore we should look very carefully and critically at Moses himself, at his understanding of his vision, ^{and} down charge imparted to him, the call which came to him in the burning bush in the desert and ask ourselves: How did Moses and the Hebrews understand God's promise of redemption? Only then can we begin to understand Christ's call promise of and call to redemption which he has given to us!

3. The first fact that emerges from an study of Moses and the Hebrews of that time, is that to all of them this promise of redemption was something very concrete, very real and very relevant to their needs. It was intimately linked to their physical and emotional suffering, to their evil oppression and vind hopes of liberation from the bondage of slavery. To them the concept of redemption only gained real and valid meaning in so far as it related to the actual situation in which the found themselves. ^{cannot be} ^{examined in a} ^{vacuum} ^{is} that

The second fact which emerges ^{is} that God did not provide ^{full} a blue-print or a final answer, a grand design of how this state of redemption would look like when Moses and Hebrews came to the end of the road. He gave them a certain promise and as events unfolded God gave Moses new insights, provided Moses with trusted councillors and revealed his intention as they moved on their way. God was alive and active, and demanding of their obedience but at the same time He expected them to use all their intellectual and emotional and moral gifts to co-operate and contribute to this engaging process of redemption and liberation.

The third fact is that to God the revelation of redemption was not limited to Moses or his time, nor was it ever intended to be limited to only one nation or one people - it was an universal promise, starting with Noah, being given birth in Abraham's momentous steps of faith taking the plunge in the unknown, moving ever onwards through Moses, David, the prophets to Christ - and from him through his people of all centuries kinds and cultures and centuries. This concept therefore is both universal and progressive and cannot be contained in set, fixed dogmas, confessions and theol. interpretations.

The moment the Christian community allows that to happen, it has misinterpreted the whole Biblical meaning of redemption and salvation.

all these facts demand that I ask a number of pertinent questions of myself and of you regarding our understanding of redemption and salvation. Do we seriously believe that we need any kind of redemption? If so,

from what - and unto what? And if so - is such redemption only personal and spiritual? Is it only God doing everything and we doing nothing except passive prayer, worship and waiting for the miracle to occur?

Do we seriously believe that this country ^{the society} of ours can only be redeemed if our understanding of redemption and salvation is enlarged to include not only the personal and spiritual spheres of life but also the social, economic, educational and political? Would any sincere, concerned and committed Christian dare deny that our whole (political, economic & social) system stands in desperate need of redemption? And if we as individual Christians, and as Christian communities, do not actively engage ourselves in specific efforts and actions to make God's redemption visible, real and meaningful, then surely ~~the~~ we should not be surprised if eventually God allows other forces temporarily to take over as judgment upon our blindness, our unwillingness, our disobedience. It is when Christians fail in their understanding and duty that ideology supplants the Gospel, that forces, alien or hostile to the Chr. faith, for a time takes over and