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Son of God?' (1 John 5:4, 5). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, etc. But we must put the armour on, and we must use it too. 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony'. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints'. Alas! how many have been overcome like Peter, through sleeping when they ought to have been watching and praying!

'Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. *Amen*'.

BIBLICAL HEBREW WORDS

H. L. ELLISON, B.A., B.D.

Man in Society (*cont.*)

Slaves

Apart from the cases just discussed where *na'ar* means a slave the regular word is *'ebed*. This has no feminine and doubtless in many cases includes female slaves. Where a feminine is needed, either *'amah* (root-meaning uncertain) or *shipchah* (related to the Phoenician for family) is used. They are used apparently interchangeably in Biblical Hebrew and are translated handmaid and maid-servant indifferently; in fact they mean female slave.

Though the English versions show little variation in the rendering of *'ebed*—in the AV servant 716 times, bondman 20 times, man-servant 23 times, bondage 10 times—and its root meaning, to work or labour, is clear, yet its translation presents major and probably insoluble difficulties.

The *'ebed* is the man who works because he has to, not because he wants to, i.e., a slave, whether a prisoner of war, bought with money, or born in his owner's house (Gen. 17:12). It is a

major weakness of both AV and RV that they have avoided the translation 'slave'; the euphemistic 'servant'—even if it is derived from the Latin *servus* = slave—has obscured both the social picture and the spiritual lessons to be drawn from it. It has been corrected to some extent by RSV and more thoroughly by Moffatt, but even he does not go as far as he should.

The Hired Labourer

Until society began to disintegrate under the later monarchy, the family was the unit of life and work. To have to work for one outside it was in itself an indignity. The hired labourer (*sakir*) was little esteemed. In Dt. 15:18 we find the work of the slave reckoned as worth twice that of a hireling. On the other hand he was entirely dependent on the honesty of his employer (Lev. 19:13; Dt. 24:14; Mal. 3:5), and his life was proverbially bitter (Job 7:1f). This was to a great extent because if his family could not save him the shame of having to hire himself out, it could not stand up for him, if he was wronged.

There is another word, *mesharet*, translated in AV servant 6 times, servitor once and minister 16 times, is used of priests and Levites, of prophets' attendants and of courtiers. It obviously is a word of honour.

Conditions of Slavery

In contrast to the *sakir* the slave was a member of his owner's family (cf. Vol. XXV, p. 27f). Apart from the 'Hebrew slave' (see below) slaves will normally have been foreigners, but they became so completely members of the family circle that they were circumcised (Gen. 17:12) and ate the Passover (Ex. 12:44), though the hired servant might not (Ex. 12:45). Even more strikingly a priest's slave, but neither his hired servant nor his daughter married to an alien, might eat holy food (Lev. 22:10ff).

With two limitations the owner's power over his *'ebed* was absolute. He might not kill him (Ex. 21:20), but a flogging that ended in fatal consequences after a lapse of a day or two remained unpunished. He might not mutilate him (Ex. 21:26f) for slavery does not alter the dignity of man created in the image of God. This is a typical example of the superiority of the Law of

Moses over typical Fertile Crescent codes like the Code of Hammurabi. A slave's marriage depended on his master and both wife and children remained his property (Ex. 21:4). With one exception (Ex. 21:7-11, Dt. 21:10-14) the owner had the right to sell his slaves, but this linking with the family suggests that it was rare. Indeed it is questionable whether in some ways the master's power over his 'ebed differed much from a father's power over his minor children; certainly *na'ar* is used for both.

Our concepts of slavery have been moulded mainly by the worse forms of slavery in imperial Rome and by the iniquities of negro slavery in America. Obviously slavery in Israel could be and normally was something very different. In some cases the slave of a rich man could prosper sufficiently to become a slave owner himself even while he remained a slave, cf. 2 Sa. 9:3, 10. At the same time it is made quite clear that slavery is tolerated by God, not approved (Lev. 25:42, 55).

Female Slaves

There is no trace in Israel of the Roman abomination by which slaves could be treated as breeding animals, nor had the owner the right to take his pleasure of his slaves as he wished. Their position in the family and their dignity as human beings gave them the right of marriage. If, as so often, the slave-woman was married to the head of the family or one of his sons, then whether she was an Israelite (Ex. 21:7-11) or a foreigner (Dt. 21:10-14), she became virtually a free woman. All that really differentiated her from the free woman was that she had no family to appeal to in case of wrong, or to return to, if she was divorced. There is no evidence that the children of such a family normally suffered any disability. The one case mentioned (Jdg. 11:2) is hardly a strict parallel.

The concubine (*pilegish*) was not originally a slave wife. The word is non-Semitic and may refer primarily to a form of marriage in which the wife remained in her father's home, and the children were reckoned in the mother's, not the father's clan. The one fairly certain example of this Jdg. 8:31; 9:1f. From here it will have expanded to cover other less normal forms of

marriage. The concubine-wife of the Levite (Jdg. 19:1) was obviously neither in the category of Gideon's concubine, nor was she a slave-wife. In the later books of the Bible concubine probably covers all those unions where the woman did not have all the privileges of the free wife married with a dowry. It is improbable that it includes, as is so often thought, purely temporary unions.

For convenience the harlot (*zonah*, or *'ishshah zonah*) is dealt with here. She must be clearly distinguished from the cult prostitute (*qedeshah*, Gen. 38:21f; Dt. 23:17; Hos. 4:14). These 'holy women' will be dealt with later under 'Cultic Persons'. Doubtless they are referred to more frequently than in these three cases, but they are given the opprobrious name of the common harlot by the writers who looked on them as an abomination. The harlot belonged to the very lowest rank of society. The necessity that drove her to her profession implied that she had no one at all to turn to for help and protection. In many cases she will have been one of those widows who are mentioned repeatedly as needing the protection and justice of society, just as the fatherless will often have been their children. This explains why they are normally mentioned without any special word of condemnation.

Israelite Slaves

There are only four ways in which the Law envisages an Israelite's becoming an *'ebed*.

(i) He might be sold to make good a theft (Ex. 22:3). Such a person would go free in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10, 54).

(ii) He might sell himself because of his extreme poverty. If he had sold himself to a fellow Israelite, Lev. 25:39ff demands that he occupy the position of *sakir*, not *'ebed*, and that he receive his freedom in the year of Jubilee. The reason for this law is twofold: firstly he did not completely lose his legal rights nor his standing in society; secondly, he would return home to his restored property, the loss of which presumably caused his poverty with some capital to start afresh. If he sold himself (Lev. 25:47) to a *ger* or *toshab* (a resident alien, see below), there is a standing

right of redemption by himself or a kinsman, and in any case freedom in the year of Jubilee.

(iii) A father might sell his daughter (Ex. 21:7). Though the sense of the Hebrew is not absolutely clear, it would seem that the right is confined to those cases where she is intended to be the wife of her owner or his son.

(iv) He might become an 'ebed 'ibri (Ex. 21:2; Dt. 15:12; Jer. 34:9, 14). It has been usual since Rabbinic times to take 'Hebrew servant' as equivalent to 'Israelite slave', but two things should make us hesitate to follow tradition. It seems very difficult to reconcile the legislation of Ex. and Dt. with that of Lev. 25, if 'Hebrew servant' means merely any enslaved Israelite. Then no adequate reason has ever been suggested why 'Hebrew' should be used in this context, if it simply means Israelite. Reference to a concordance will show that Hebrew is virtually only used on the lips of foreigners or in a foreign context; it is not Israel's name for itself. Archaeology has established an almost certain link between Hebrew, and Habiru (Akkadian), Apiru (Egyptian) and 'pru (Ugaritic—vowels uncertain), who are found in inscriptions from the 19th to the 12th centuries B.C. It is obviously not a national name; they are 'landless soldiers, raiders, captives and slaves of miscellaneous ethnic origins'¹. Some form of poverty, landlessness, or lower social standing seems implicit in the name. Alt² considers the phrase 'Hebrew servant' in the Law to mean the man or woman who by loss of land has lost his position in society and is unable to meet his obligations. Debt is the probable cause of slavery, and it should be noted that in Dt. 15:12 voluntary action by the 'Hebrew servant' is ruled out, and in Ex. 21:2 it is not necessarily implied. We are evidently dealing with a class which has dropped through the bottom of society and for whom the year of Jubilee holds out no hope. The law mercifully allows them the possibility of working their way up again, or of voluntarily accepting slavery in a family where they can say, 'I love my master'.

¹ W. F. Albright: *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 182.

² A. Alt: *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts*, p. 20-23.

2 Kings 4:1 is evidence that when a debtor could not pay, he or his children could be enslaved by force. There is no evidence, however, that this was consistent with the Law of Moses. The time and place of our example was not one of punctilious law observance.

All this means that there is no reason why we should not translate 'ebed consistently by slave, whenever it refers to the normal relationships of human society, provided we are willing to try and envisage a very different social system to our own. This applies too to its frequent use as a formula of politeness and deference, e.g., Gen. 18:3; 32:4; 'amah (1 Sa. 1:11, 16) and *shipchah* (1 Sa. 1:18) are also used in this way.

[Note: For the sake of new readers we mention that this sub-section, 'Man in Society', began in the April issue and will conclude in next issue.]

‘THE MYSTERY OF GOD, EVEN CHRIST’*

(Concluded from last issue)

T. NORTON STERRETT, TH.M.

The third view of 'the mystery' is that of Dr G. Campbell Morgan, namely, that it is the Incarnation. J. Agar Beet has an equivalent position, apparently. Speaking of the view that the mystery is Christ, he asserts that 'it is confirmed by the context; and by the aim of the whole Epistle, which is to set forth the mysterious grandeur of the Son of God. To know Christ, i.e., to comprehend the purpose of His incarnation with an acquaintance derived from personal contact with Him, is to know the mystery of God, i.e., the purpose kept secret during long ages, and now revealed, viz., that without respect of nationality God will receive into His favour and cover with eternal glory those who believe the Gospel¹. Dr Beet's view may not be quite identical with Dr Morgan's, but in both there is the emphasis on the

* From *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas, U.S. by kind permission.

¹ *Commentary on Colossians*, p. 170.