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NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

W. WILCOX

(ELEGCHEIN = *to reprove, convict, convince*)

Here is a word used frequently both in the Gospels and in the Epistles. Trench, in his *Synonyms of the N.T.*, says, 'It is so to rebuke another, with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of the truth, as to bring him, if not to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin.' Thus in John 8:46, 'Which of you *convinceth* Me of sin?': many rebuked Him, many laid sin to His charge (Matt. 9:3, John 9:16), but none brought sin home to the Lord's conscience. In John 3:20 the evil-doer does not come to the light 'lest his works should be *reproved*', lest he should be convicted of their evil nature and his conscience be troubled by the burden of their guilt.

This convicting power is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, Who, as promised by the Lord Jesus, when 'He is come, He will *reprove* the world of sin etc.' Trench remarks here: '*convince*. . . would have been the preferable rendering, giving a depth and fulness of meaning to the work of the Holy Spirit which the word "reprove", in some part, fails to express.' Westcott, in his Gospel of John, commenting on John 16:8, remarks, 'The idea of "conviction" is complex. It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination of unquestionable proofs, of decisive judgement, of punitive power. Whatever the final issue may be, he who convicts another, places the truth of the case in dispute in a clear light before him, so that it may be seen and acknowledged as truth. He who then rejects the conclusion which this exposition involves, rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril.' He then groups the different aspects of this conviction under four heads which, with some modifications, we may follow.

In the uses of the word in the N.T. there appear the following aspects of the word.

(i) The Cognition of the full facts of the case after search and test have been made, e.g., John 3:20, Eph. 5:13.

(ii) The Consciousness of the wrong of such actions thus investigated, are brought home to the doer of the wrong: Jas. 2:9; Jude 15; 1 Cor. 14:24; 2 Tim. 4:2.

(iii) The Chastisement which such actions must merit as real desert. 1 Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:9; 2:15; cp. Eph. 5:11.

(iv). The Correction which should result in the conduct of him who is exercised by such 'reproof' or 'chastisement'.

This grouping of the usages of the word at once arouses in the thoughtful mind the consideration of the *agents* which are employed to effect this conviction, either as to sin as mostly in the Gospels; or as to wrong teaching as mostly in the Pastoral Epistles; or as to the unseparated walk of the believer as in the other Pauline writings. We would briefly refer to some of these.

1. *The Holy Spirit* is primarily, as noted above, the great Agent in the world engaged in the work of convincing men in respect of sin, of righteousness and of judgement. We, as 'sub-agents,' may be of use in the presentation of the truths of the Gospel, in the denouncing of sin, and in earnest warning of the perils involved in hostility to God and His Christ. But we should ever remember the work of conviction is solely the prerogative of the Spirit of God. Do we sometimes tend to forget this when, in some modern forms of evangelism, men seek to secure 'decisions for Christ' by working up an emotional atmosphere in which such decisions may readily be forthcoming, by asking for some sign, as the raised hand or signed card, as a signification of 'making a stand for Christ,' or by an over persuasiveness to give some kind of assent to the claims of the Gospel? While some of these methods, when rightly used, may be effective, yet when they become mere routine ways by which converts may be registered, there is little wonder that many such 'converts' do not prove to be real. We need, rather, so to present our witness as to leave the Holy Spirit larger freedom to *convince* men of sin, not merely to register a 'decision'.

2. *The Light* reproves (John 3:20). It makes manifest the works which the darkness hides and which it is the desire of the

doer to keep hidden. Hence he does not come to the Light: The Light which was come into the world is the Lord Jesus Who brings all that knowledge of ethical purity, of moral order, and of spiritual truth to the mind of men, and Who seeks to make the one who comes into the light a 'child of the light'; that is, one who enters into a new type of existence in which the former subservience to the darkness is done away.

3. *The Witness of the Church* reproves, (1 Cor. 14:24). The unbeliever entering the company of Christians and hearing the truth forthtold by one or more of its members will be convinced by all, he will be judged by all. Their united stand for and witness to the truth will carry a convicting power whereby the unbeliever will have borne upon his consciousness a sense of the folly and guilt of his unbelief, and prostrating himself, he will worship God and declare that God is indeed among those assembled. Would such things happen today? Surely—if the Apostolic conditions of the presence and liberty of the Spirit were truly manifest among us.

4. *The Royal Law* reproves (Jas. 2:9), because class distinctions in a body of believers is a contradiction of the royal law which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : and love of the brethren which manifests itself in works, is itself the outcome of faith; therefore faith, without such works, is a dead thing, it has no life in it.

5. *The Believer* is to reprove (Eph. 5:11). The unfruitful works of darkness are to be reproved by him, and he is to have no fellowship with them. He is not only to hold himself aloof from such works, he is to take a more positive stand and openly reprove them. But he who would reprove the wrong way of life must show clearly, by his walk, what is the true way of life, and so will his 'reproof' become effective.

6. *The Preacher* is to reprove (2 Tim. 4:2, Tit. 1:13; 2:15; etc.). The reproof may need to be 'sharp', but it is to be administered with all longsuffering and with its true end in view, viz., to produce 'soundness in the faith'. A healthy faith can only be aroused where there is a real exercise of heart with regard to those

things for which the reproof was found necessary. A mere profession that such a condition of heart has been reached will prove insufficient; such works as are appropriate to this soundness in the faith must accompany the profession, being the outward manifestation of the fact that both mind and conscience have been cleansed of their defilement.

7. *The Coming of the Lord* will convict all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds (Jude 15). Men who have refused the convicting power of the Spirit in this day of grace will then be convicted, as the Lord executes judgement upon them; their own ungodly deeds which they have ungodly wrought and their ungodly words which they have spoken against Him will then condemn them.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD— FOUR VIEWS

JAMES H. TODD

The Fatherhood of God is a most blessed truth for the children of God, for it implies that most wonderful relationship of children to a father, only realized through the Gospel.

The Scriptures do not teach that God is the Father of all men, for Christ said to some of the Jews, 'Ye are of your father the Devil' (John 8:44); and in John 3:10 a contrast is drawn between the children of God and of the Devil. In John 1:12, 13, we are told also how we become children of God (cf. Gal. 3:26).

In the very many references to God as Father there are *seven* in which He is spoken of as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, all of these bringing Him before us as the object of praise and blessing. Besides these there are just *four* other expressions linked with the name of Father, which bring out four aspects of His relationship towards us and His dealings with us as His children.

1. In James 1:17 He is *the 'Father of Lights'* from whom comes every 'act of giving and every perfect gift.' As such He is the