

on the part of God and a determination on His part to cleanse the people from sin and to reestablish them as His holy nation. A third possibility is a declaration on their part of remembrance of all the good He has done for them in the past, of insistence that since they are His people it is natural to expect a continuance of His blessing toward them, and of impassioned setting forth of their present misery and need of His help. This third is precisely what is found here. Under some circumstances it might be entirely right and praiseworthy. The severe denunciation which it calls forth shows that in the actual situation it represented a pharisaical, holier-than-thou attitude of feeling entitled to God's blessing, rather than an attitude of true penitence or devotion to Him.

To one who is accustomed to the grand denunciations of sin with which the Book of Isaiah abounds, and to its eloquent calls to repentance and utter consecration to God, verse 10 and the earlier verse 8 naturally arouse the expectation that the purpose of pointing out God's past goodness (in verses 7 to 9) is to bring into bold relief the rebellion of the people. One soon sees, however, that in this passage that is not the case. The rebellion is mentioned rather incidentally. The purpose of detailing the wondrous acts of God in the past is solely to provide an argument for the plea to God to return to a similar attitude in the present.

The English reader can easily be led into a misunderstanding of the entire passage by the word "he" at the beginning of verse 11. In the context it sounds as if it referred to God, yet what follows cannot express God's attitude, since it refers to Him in the third person, and actually states the desire of the people that He who had so helped in the past, should again intervene in their behalf. It refers not to their rebellion, but solely to the material suffering which has resulted from it. The rendering of the Authorized Version does not fit the context, and introduces an "and" which has no counterpart in the Hebrew. It reads: "Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people." Most of this translation rests upon a long tradition, going back to very early times, but it cannot be right. Delitzsch says: "In view of the longing inquiries which follow Jehovah cannot be the subject." (3) While the American Standard Version agrees with the Authorized Version, it gives a different rendering in the margin, substantially the same as that contained in the Jewish Version (4): "Then his people remembered the days of old, the days of Moses." Ellicott says: "Probably the best rendering is, 'His people remembered the ancient days of Moses.' In any case, it is Israel that remembers, and by that act repents." (5)

The last statement, however, is utterly unwarranted. There is nothing in the verse to suggest repentance; but only desire for repetition of past blessing.

#### A PLEA FOR HELP

The statement of longing for the glorious treatment received in the days of Moses, which begins in v. 11, continues through verse 14. In verse 12 and verse 14 it is mentioned that by these actions God made Himself an everlasting or glorious name. Desire to exalt the name of God is praiseworthy, but it cannot be made an excuse for avoiding the duty of penitently seeking His will and turning away from our sin.

Verse 15 contains an impassioned plea to God to give material help to His people. Similar pleas are found in verse 17, and in 64:1, 9, and 12. It is the recurring refrain and purpose of the entire passage.

However, this plea is not grounded upon a desire to turn aside from all that is contrary to God's will, nor upon a plea that He should give strength and wisdom to

---

(3) p. 422

(4) The Holy Scriptures, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917.

(5) See Commentary, under this verse.