

### **Ruth-Points to Ponder Session 3**

*(All references taken from Oxford World Classics 1985)*

**1 Consider the following 3 extracts. How does ECG present Mr. Bradshaw and what similarities are there between him and Ruth's or even Jemima's position? What sort of comment is EG making here about social morality?**

#### **EXTRACT 1**

Mrs Bradshaw went on. "I think you deserve to know. It is partly your doing that papa is so pleased with Mrs Denbigh. He is going to buy her a silk gown this morning, and I think you ought to know why."

"Why?" asked Jemima.

"Because papa is so pleased to find that you mind what she says."

"I mind what she says! To be sure I do, and always did. But why should papa give her a gown for that? I think he ought to give it me rather," said Jemima, half laughing.

"I am sure he would, dear; he will give you one, I am certain, if you want one. He was so pleased to see you like your old self to Mr Farquhar last night. We neither of us could think what had come over you this last month; but now all seems right."

A dark cloud came over Jemima's face. She did not like this close observation and constant comment upon her manners; and what had Ruth to do with it?

"I am glad you were pleased," said she, very coldly. Then, after a pause, she added, "But you have not told me what Mrs Denbigh had to do with my good behaviour."

"Did not she speak to you about it?" asked Mrs Bradshaw, looking up.

"No; why should she? She has no right to criticise what I do. She would not be so impertinent," said Jemima, feeling very uncomfortable and suspicious.

"Yes, love! she would have had a right, for papa had desired her to do it."

"Papa desired her! What do you mean, mamma?"

"Oh, dear! I dare say I should not have told you," said Mrs Bradshaw, perceiving, from Jemima's tone of voice, that something had gone wrong. "Only you spoke as if it would be impertinent in Mrs Denbigh, and I am sure she would not do anything that was impertinent. You know, it would be but right for her to do what papa told her; and he said a great deal to her, the other day, about finding out why you were so cross, and bringing you right. And you are right now, dear!" said Mrs Bradshaw, soothingly, thinking that Jemima was annoyed (like a good child) at the recollection of how naughty she had been.

"Then papa is going to give Mrs Denbigh a gown because I was civil to Mr Farquhar last night?"

"Yes, dear!" said Mrs Bradshaw, more and more frightened at Jemima's angry manner of speaking—low-toned, but very indignant.

#### **EXTRACT 2**

"Suppose a delay of a month in requiring payment might save a man's credit—prevent his becoming a bankrupt?" put in Mr Farquhar.

"I would not give it him. I would let him have money to set up again as soon as he had passed the Bankruptcy Court; if he never passed, I might, in some cases, make him an allowance; but I would always keep my justice and my charity separate."

"And yet charity (in your sense of the word) degrades; justice, tempered with mercy and consideration, elevates."

"That is not justice—justice is certain and inflexible. No! Mr Farquhar, you must not allow any Quixotic notions to mingle with your conduct as a tradesman." Ch 21 pp239-240

### **EXTRACT 3 Ch 25**

The truth was, that he had met with so many small mortifications during the progress of the election, that the pleasure which he would otherwise have felt in the final success of his scheme was much diminished.

He had more than tacitly sanctioned bribery; and now that the excitement was over, he regretted it; not entirely from conscientious motives, though he was uneasy from a slight sense of wrong-doing; but he was more pained, after all, to think that, in the eyes of some of his townsmen, his hitherto spotless character had received a blemish. He, who had been so stern and severe a censor on the undue influence exercised by the opposite party in all preceding elections, could not expect to be spared by their adherents now, when there were rumours that the hands of the scrupulous Dissenters were not clean. Before, it had been his boast that neither friend nor enemy could say one word against him; now, he was constantly afraid of an indictment for bribery, and of being compelled to appear before a Committee to swear to his own share in the business.

His uneasy, fearful consciousness made him stricter and sterner than ever; as if he would quench all wondering, slanderous talk about him in the town by a renewed austerity of uprightness; that the slack-principled Mr Bradshaw of one month of ferment and excitement might not be confounded with the highly-conscientious and deeply-religious Mr Bradshaw, who went to chapel twice a day, and gave a hundred pounds a-piece to every charity in the town, as a sort of thank-offering that his end was gained.

### **2 What are your thoughts on the way EG presents Jemima in this section?**

Mrs Denbigh, if not many months older in years, had known sorrow and cares so early that she was much older in character. Besides, her shy reserve, and her quiet daily walk within the lines of duty, were much in accordance with Mr Farquhar's notion of what a wife should be p. 241

### **3 What are your thoughts on the narrator's summation of Ruth below?**

Love was very precious to Ruth now, as of old time. It was one of the faults of her nature to be ready to make any sacrifices for those who loved her, and to value affection almost above its price. She had yet to learn the lesson, that it is more blessed to love than to be beloved; and lonely as the impressible years of her youth had been—without parents, without brother or sister—it was, perhaps, no wonder that she clung tenaciously to every symptom of regard, and could not relinquish the love of any one without a pang.

### **4 In these 3 extracts, Ruth first calls Donne (Bellingham) a bad man and then describes his actions as 'evil'.**

- a) How far would you agree with EG's view of the matter. Would you describe him or his actions as EVIL?**
- b) Is there anything in Bellingham/Donne worth loving? Why does Gaskell call him an idol ? This word has religious connotations.**

- c) **What are your views on Ruth's reasoning pp 272-74 and 285? Might this rationale be viewed rather differently by a modern audience?**

**Extract 1**

"Oh, my God! I do believe Leonard's father is a bad man, and yet, oh! pitiful God, I love him; I cannot forget—I cannot!"

**Extract 2**

He had so lost his power over her—his power, which had stirred her so deeply the night before—that, except as one knowing her error and her shame, and making a cruel use of such knowledge, she had quite separated him from the idol of her youth.

**Extract 3**

The peaceful rest which her mind took was in thinking of Leonard. She dared not look before or behind, but she could see him well at present. She brooded over the thought of him, till she dreaded his father more and more. By the light of her child's purity and innocence, she saw evil clearly, and yet more clearly. She thought that, if Leonard ever came to know the nature of his birth, she had nothing for it but to die out of his sight. He could never know—human heart could never know, her ignorant innocence, and all the small circumstances which had impelled her onwards. But God knew. And if Leonard heard of his mother's error, why, nothing remained but death; for she felt, then, as if she had it in her power to die innocently out of such future agony; but that escape is not so easy. Suddenly a fresh thought came, and she prayed that, through whatever suffering, she might be purified. Whatever trials, woes, measureless pangs, God might see fit to chastise her with, she would not shrink, if only at last she might come into His presence in Heaven. Alas! the shrinking from suffering we cannot help. That part of her prayer was vain. And as for the rest, was not the sure justice of His law finding her out even now? His laws once broken, His justice and the very nature of those laws bring the immutable retribution; but if we turn penitently to Him, He enables us to bear our punishment with a meek and docile heart, "for His mercy endureth for ever."

**5 Consider Bellingham's proposal PP 299-300 and also consider the acculturation of a romance narrative - a form of social control. Its aim is to control wayward men within the domestic ideal. They are tamed by a good woman. He is the bad man and she is the good woman, or is she????? In a Romance narrative Ruth would accept Bellingham's offer, make herself an honest woman, and tame the wayward male in the process-why does Gaskell make Ruth refuse this Romance ending?**

**6 Why does Gaskell see fit to make Leonard ill?**

**7 What are your views on Mrs. Pearson's introduction to the story as a device to work out the denouement?**

**8 There is a very dramatic scene at the end of chapter 26. In what light does it portray the main characters in the drama and what are expectations as we move into the final sections of the novel?**