Holmes devotional – Michael Halm -- 1

Although the title may seem an oxymoron, *A Sherlock Holmes Devotional* does combine Sherlock Holmes and Bible study. As Trisha White Priebe explains "Holmes continues to leave endless clues that teach us timeless truths about ourselves." She writes in the introduction, "It is my sincerest hope that what you find in the following pages only deepens your understanding of the Master and the mastermind", referring respectively to Jesus and Holmes.

One important clue is Holmes' relationship with Watson. Quoting Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, "Two are better than one", Priebe connects this friendship with our relationship with Christ and our brothers and sister Christians. We should stir up one another like the doctor and the detective to love and good works. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Pride seems to be Holmes' greatest fault. After a rare recorded and embarrassing failure, Holmes instructed his faithful companion, "Watson, if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little over-confident in my power, kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

As Holmes explains, "Nothing clears up a case so much as stating it to another person." We do not really understand anything until we can communicate it to someone else, including the Good News.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understand." (Prv 3:5)

Holmes worked for justice, but also sometimes tempered justice with mercy, letting the guilty go free and kept clients' secrets. Holmes' constant seeking for problems to solve is a clue to our unquenchable desire for He Who is Mystery. His preoccupation with death emphasizes the importance of every life, no matter whether prince or pauper. He also worked to expose lies and reveal the truth.

Priebe also gets into Arthur Conan Doyle's own story. He admitted by the time he entered medical school he had rejected God. Sometimes his Catholic and Jesuit upbringing seems to show. At the end of one case, for example, he had Holmes say, "God help us!" and "There, but for the grace of God, goes Sherlock Holmes."

In another case in the countryside Holmes takes a break to appreciate birds and flowers and says, "There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers."

Holmes gives the advice, "The skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic." This is very much like "Whatever is Finally, brothers and sisters, **whatever** is **true,** whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things."

Perseverance is one of Holmes virtues. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* he says, "There is nothing more stimulating than a case where everything goes against you." Interestingly it was this story that made Holmes and Doyle famous.

Priebee also contrasts Holmes with God. Holmes almost always withholds information from the others until the end of the case, including vital clues, going against the Fair Play Rule in later detective stories. God has revealed the ending of His story, eternal life with Him in heaven or not.