THE CHRISTIAN USE OF THE PSALMS

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WITH ESSAYS ON THE PROPER PSALMS IN THE ANGLICAN PRAYER BOOK

BY THE

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TO MY WIFE

THE PARTNER OF MY TOILS

AND INTERESTS

PREFACE

THE compilers of the Anglican Prayer Book deliberately placed the Book of Psalms in the forefront of congregational worship. The question, however, has arisen, In what sense can modern Christian worshippers use these ancient forms of prayer and praise? The change which has passed, or is passing, over the views of Biblical scholars cannot but affect those of educated laymen, and there is some little danger that critical and exegetical progress may be thought to be altogether adverse to the Christian use of the Psalms. Small books on great subjects are needed; hence the present contribution to a subject which lovers of a complete and well-ordered church service cannot regard as of trifling importance.

Our religious literature is not deficient in general surveys of the contents of the

Psalter, and in finely expressed eulogies of their poetical and spiritual beauties. But these eulogistic surveys have not often been based on an exact study of the details of the Psalms, and still more rarely have they come from writers in sympathy with the modern critical movement. The "small book" now presented to the public is eulogistic, in so far as a regard for historical truth permits it to be so; it is also in sympathy with a criticism and an exegesis which aim at thoroughness and exactness. Its range is limited; it deals only with a number of the Proper Psalms appointed in the Prayer Book for use on certain high days. Can the retention of such a use of those Psalms be justified from the point of view of critics who are attached members of our broad and truly Catholic National Church?

In the opening Essay the conditions of the problem are stated, and the urgent necessity for some speedy reform in the present system of Psalms and Canticles set forth. It is not concealed from the reader that a satisfactory solution of the problem depends on our taking a long step forward in the popu-

larisation of sound views on the Psalms. The three translations which in different degrees possess Church authorisation are all of them below the highest standard of scholarship, and this affects the interpretation of many of the passages which have been thought to be most distinctly Christian. The present work, which is the forerunner of a new attempt to translate the Psalms from a corrected text, seeks to guide opinion both as to the best use to be made of the three versions referred to, and as to the much improved translation some day to be hoped for. It addresses itself to lay as well as to professional students, and therefore does not hold aloof from practical arguments and proposals. The use of the Psalms in public worship ought not to be discontinued, but we ought not to use them in an unrevised form, and the selection of Psalms for high days ought to be in accordance with the best knowledge of the time; at any rate, clergymen and congregations should not be compelled to use passages which can only be made Christian by the application of uncritical methods of interpretation. There is much unrecognised beauty in the Psalms

which scholars may be expected to bring to light to compensate the Church for any apparent loss. Let us, then, be brave, and not refuse to reconsider the judgments of earlier theologians, who were no more infallible than we ourselves are.

Among the books suggested in the opening Essay to the reader, Dr. Driver's edition of the Prayer Book Version and a new Revised Version of the Revised Hebrew Text, in parallel columns, with a helpful Introduction and Glossary, may be specially mentioned here (Clarendon Press, 1898).

T. K. C.

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THE CHRISTIAN USE OF THE PSALMS

THE custom of saying or singing a portion of the Prayer Book version of the Psalms at each morning and evening service has met with wide appreciation from the liberal Nonconformists of our own day. That admirable preacher, J. H. Thom, considers that the type of spiritual character produced in the Anglican Church derives much of its excellence from this practice ("Christ the Revealer," 1879, p. 97). Few Anglicans, indeed, could go so far as Millet the painter, who said of the Latin Psalms, that they were his Breviary; at least, it is my impression that the Psalms are not much read by Anglicans out of church. That they do derive good from the Psalms read or sung in church I cannot doubt. But I am sure that they might derive vastly more good from them. The common

practice, from which, of course, no officiating clergyman can deviate, seems to me open to very severe criticism. It reminds us of the old Puritan practice which was carried by the Pilgrim Fathers to New England, of reading the English Bible straight through over and over again, from beginning to end. That practice was not nearly as much conducive to edification as the opposite practice of selecting the most suitable portions. For some books of the Bible contain but little that is edifying, and, similarly, there are certain Psalms, which only those students who can see the Divine Spirit working upon most unpromising material, can find spiritually helpful. And even in those Psalms which, upon the whole, are elevating and inspiring, there are verses which, to the Christian sentiment, are displeasing or even offensive. To which it must be added that in many Psalms there are verses or parts of verses which, as given in our old translations, are scarcely intelligible, and that, even in the easiest Psalms, there is often, as most readers will think, an embarrassing incoherence.

These imperfections, which result for the most part from the comparatively early stage

of development to which the Psalter belongs, are beginning to be more painfully felt than they were formerly. Our fathers devised or accepted subtle theological explanations to draw a meaning out of what seemed at first to be, spiritually, a barren rock. But even with these explanations ready to hand, some of our fathers were unwilling to lay too much stress on the Psalter. They preferred a metrical to a prose translation, and they would not be bound to the continuous reading even of this. This is what Thomas Cartwright, the "Nonconformist Hooker" (died 1602), said of the Church practice in his "Second Admonition to the Parliament" ("Religious Pamphlets," edited by Dearmer, p. 93):

"Againe, the Psalmes be all read in forme of prayer; they be not all prayers, the people seldom marke them, and sometimes when they marke them, they thinke some of them strange geare, and all for that they are onely read, and scarse read sometimes."

Cartwright's objection is badly expressed. But it seems to embrace these three points:

(1) The Psalms are all used liturgically, though they are not all suitable for use as prayers. (2) The people listen to them uncomprehendingly, partly because they are sometimes such "strange geare." And (3) they are read without explanation, and often badly read. By prayer, Cartwright cannot mean merely supplication; he means an address to God, whether in the form of supplication, or of thanksgiving. It might, of course, be possible to answer this by an attack on so-called extempore prayer, which (who does not know?) is sometimes too much like a veiled sermon. But I would rather take another line. While sympathising with Cartwright in his objection to the existing Anglican practice, I am equally convinced that public prayer need not be, and should not be, always as compact, and, if I may say so, as scientifically accurate as the Latin and English collects, which seem to me to take the same place among prayers that sonnets do in our poetical literature. True prayer is beautifully described in those words of an early Israelite, "I have poured out my soul before Jehovah" (1 Sam. i. 15), and such a pouring out of the soul is expressly justified

by a Psalmist when he says (Ps. lxii. 8, see Septuagint):

> Trust in him, all ye assembled people,
> Pour out your heart before him,
> For God is unto us a refuge.

A minister, it is agreed on all hands, speaks for the congregation. There is no theoretical reason why the prayer of a ministerial representative of the congregation should not be as free as the private prayer of every devout worshipper, who is not tied to forms of prayer, must be. Anglicans, too often, in discussing this subject, show a want of comprehension, which is solely due to prejudice. Just because I am a convinced supporter of free prayer (alternating with forms of prayer), I should dismiss Cartwright's first objection to the use of the Psalms in public worship, which is that the Psalms do not always preserve throughout the language of address to God.

Cartwright's second objection is that the Psalms are not naturally expressed; they are, therefore, not "marked" by the people. I believe that there is still a great deal of force in this criticism. Many of the Psalms

are, beyond doubt, chiefly valued by most devout church-goers for the sake of one single verse, or of single verses occurring at intervals, which, in English at once dignified and impressive, embody their deepest aspirations. Ought this to be the case? Is there no one among us who can turn a whole Psalm into English so dignified and impressive that, though some verses may stand supreme, yet the others will also be of value to us, partly through some beauty of their own, partly through their relation to the few verses of sovereign excellence?

The third objection of the Puritan divine appears to be that the Psalms are not explained as well as said in church. Certainly it would often conduce to edification if the obscure language of a Psalm could be sometimes explained from the pulpit, supposing that the preacher knew enough for this. At any rate, it would be a great advantage to have the Psalms better read. The treatment of the Psalms in our churches is a weak point in our practice. Words which we understand, admire, and love, we could not hurry over; who would hurry in

the recitation of a favourite passage of Shakespeare?

There is much more that Cartwright might have urged against the continuous recitation of the Psalms in church in the course of a month. No doubt he supplemented his printed criticisms on other occasions. What has come down to us is still, as it seems to me, not altogether devoid of weight. But in order to judge fairly of the Puritan position, we ought to take into account the facts of history. Have the children of the Puritans retained a sympathetic interest in the Psalter? Not to care at all for the Psalms would certainly be a proof of an impoverished spiritual character; so far as this I can heartily agree with Archbishop Alexander. Do the non-episcopal Churches of other lands still care for the Psalms? I am afraid that France, Switzerland, and Germany will have to be reconquered by the Psalmists; modern hymns (among the best of which, religiously, are the German) have too largely displaced the fiery old Hebrew Psalms. But this is not the case in Scotland. There we still find a greater love for the Psalter than we, with all our daily services, are able to boast of. Of

course, this is partly connected with the greater love of Scottish Protestants for the book of which the Psalter forms a part. Anglicans are but half-hearted lovers of the Bible. No wonder, then, that they do not appreciate the Psalms as much as Scottish Presbyterians. But the inferiority of England to Scotland as regards the Psalter is certainly due in part to the mechanical use of the Psalms which prevails south of the Tweed.

It is this mechanical use which forces itself continually on one's notice. Of intelligent study of the Psalms, where is there a trace? Of affection (I do not say reverence) for the Psalms, apart from particular verses, how many of us can speak? Here and there exceptions may and must exist; but one may easily pass through life without meeting with them. What one does perceive is painful enough—a habit of using words without attaching any definite meaning to them. Nor can it be said that the Anglican clergy make any serious effort to counteract these abuses; perhaps, indeed, it has never been suggested to them to make a study of the Psalms, apart from Church theology. There may be a gleam of hope for the future; certainly, the

last ten years have produced good books on the Psalter, some of which are by clergymen of the Anglican Church. But it is only a faint gleam at present. It is well that the Psalms are now so often sung, so that people can glide gently over the parts they do not understand, or do not sympathise with. More especially is it a gain not to be obliged to say the imprecatory passages. Singing helps us to throw ourselves back into a far distant past. But I am afraid that this hardly justifies putting the imprecatory Psalms into the mouths of tender choristers!

Some reform is clearly required, and the longer it is postponed, the more radical it will have to be, if thoughtful clergymen and laymen are to be satisfied. It will, in some respects, be easier for the authorities to grant it, because the actual condition of things is due to the provincialism of our own Church. Nowhere is the principle of continuous recitation of the Psalms carried to such an extreme as in the English, the Irish, and the Scottish Episcopal Churches. The operation of this principle is mitigated in the Greek, and still more in the Roman Church, by the large development of proper Psalms and selections

of Psalms for special days. We of the Anglican Church have proper Psalms for only six high days, and it is greatly to be feared that the selection of those Psalms is based on principles of interpretation which in no other field of literature would be tolerated for a moment. The investigation of these proper Psalms surely needs to be taken in hand. It is more than probable that the list requires considerable modification. So that we have one great and undeniable abuse —the practice of reciting the Psalms straight through in the course of a month, and another, at present less obvious, and therefore less painful abuse—the recitation of Psalms on special days which are not always well chosen from a modern Church point of view. There is also a counsel of expediency which may well be addressed to the reformers of the future—viz., the enlargement of the list of canticles.

It is fortunate that those who plead for a removal of the first-mentioned abuse can quote the example of the sister Episcopal Church in the United States. It is now 114 years since John Wesley prepared for his disciples a version of select Psalms, arranged for a month of thirty days, and adapted to

Christian worship by the omission of unsuitable passages. The leaders of the Church of England in those days were not wise enough to take Wesley's hint: they were the same prelates who had the unwisdom to discourage a translation of an admirable and critical German introduction to the Old Testament.* The leaders of the young American Church were more discerning. The American Prayer Book of 1789 and 1792 retained, it is true, the Anglican arrangement of the Psalms, but it gave permission to the ministers to read any one of ten selections of Psalms, except on the days for which proper Psalms were appointed. In making these selections, the American Church leaders recognised the principle of adaptation by omission. They also prefixed several new canticles to the Psalter, to be used at the discretion of the minister on festival days, composed of verses from different Psalms. I owe the information in this paragraph chiefly to a well-known Episcopal clergyman, Dr. J. P. Peters, of St. Michael's Church, New York.

* See the writer's "Founders of Old Testament Criticism" (Methuen & Co.).

Such a reform as the American Church has adopted is the minimum with which thoughtful Anglicans can be contented. It is not enough to make the praises of our sanctuaries what they ought to be, but it would remove one of the greatest faults of our Prayer Book. Selections of suitable Psalms for optional use, and a few more optional canticles, taken from the Scriptures (we can hardly ask, as yet, for "uninspired" modern canticles), will no doubt have to be granted in the near future. This will be a step towards primitive use, for the custom of continuous recitation of the Psalter presupposes an increase of formalism and a stiffer and more mechanical use of the Scriptures. The custom of selecting proper Psalms greatly antedates that of reciting the Psalms continuously; it comes from the Second Temple, and is the only one which can, strictly speaking, be called primitive.

So much has been done of late to stimulate the interest of Anglicans in foreign missions, that it seems natural to regard the subject from a missionary point of view also. Let us, then, ask how we can put before our converts a Prayer Book which

contains so many imprecatory Psalms? Will it not seem to those of them who think at all as if we were just as vindictive, and as it our God were just as vindictive, as heathen warriors? I think I would rather that a Japanese catechumen should be baptized by an American missionary, because he would then have in his hands the American Prayer Book—not that the American Prayer Book is at all completely, as regards the Psalter, what a thoughtful Churchman would desire to see it. I fear that our unmitigated adoption of the Psalter as it stands may counteract that spirit of love which is one half of Christianity.

Let the laity study these matters, and express an opinion upon them, and the reform will come all the quicker. The laity have often criticised the clergy for using old formulæ in a new sense, for putting new wine into old bottles. But the laity do this themselves every day when they come to church and say or sing the Psalms straight through with the choir or the minister. The Hebrew Psalms, even if post-exilic, need to be adapted for use in the Christian Church; it is not right to continue a usage which is

detrimental to the highest interests of religion —detrimental also to a proper regard for the rights of language. As a matter of fact, we need a fresh translation of the Psalms. Dr. Driver * has lately given his support to some weighty remarks of Bishop Westcott, bearing on the importance of a scholarly, but not pedantic, revision of the Prayer Book Psalter. I doubt whether the present moment is a suitable one to urge this; indeed, I am not sure that I think that such a revision would long content us, for the study of the text of the Psalter is rapidly passing into a new stage which a modernised Church of England cannot consistently ignore. But, at any rate, we need what the American Church has got; it would not, indeed, be reform enough, but it would considerably improve our services of song, and many would hail it with joy.

I now pass to another aspect of the question. Supposing that the very moderate reform long ago won in America, were granted to England, to what extent will the Psalms be capable of expressing our thoughts and aspirations? This inquiry is specially necessary in the case of the proper Psalms.

* "The Parallel Psalter" (1898), Preface, pp. 40–42.

I do not observe any alteration in the list of these Psalms in the American Prayer Book. Fresh selections have, indeed, been added for other high days, but the Psalms appointed in our Prayer Book for use on Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter Day, Ascension Day, and Whit Sunday remain unchanged. And unchanged they will, I fear, for some time to come, remain in the Anglican Prayer Book, because a revision of these requires an interest in the historical study of the Bible, which, perhaps through a deficiency in optimism, I cannot see to exist even among the high officers of the Anglican Church. It remains for us, therefore, modern-minded but loyal members of that great body, to see how we stand related to this conservative practice. It may be that we shall sometimes find out some legitimate meaning even of passages unconsciously misinterpreted by the compilers of our Prayer Book, which will provisionally enable us to use these Psalms. It may also be that sometimes we may have regretfully to confess that, except in a general spirit of praisefulness, we cannot accompany the mass of our congregation in its jubilant singing of one or another of the old festival

Psalms. There will be no irreverence in this course. Absolute reverence belongs only to God, and to those ideal objects which are in reality aspects of God. It is, therefore, permissible and commendable for a reverent man to examine into the rightness of the conclusions and decisions of the Church to which he belongs. It is also permissible and commendable to use the forms of the Church in any sense which makes them at all living and real to us, provided that we do not conceal our desire for a reform, at some suitable time, of formulæ and customs which no one would nowadays wish to propose for the first time.

Let me, in conclusion, venture to ask readers such as I desire to have, to make a point of reading the Psalms which they hear in church over again in their homes in some other translation. The Psalter is an ancient, and therefore a difficult, book. No one translator, therefore, can be sure that he is always correct, or reproduces the most important part of the meaning of some deep but vague word. Still less, if possible, can he be always sure that he is following the best reading of the original text. In a notice of my friend Dr. Driver's "Parallel Psalter,"

which appeared in the *Church Gazette* for August 27th, 1898, and in an article in the *Expositor* for March 1899 I have referred to some phenomena of the Hebrew text of the Psalter which are very frequently overlooked. I will not repeat myself, but will presume to caution readers of the Psalms against too implicit a reliance on the traditional text. I have remarked already that the inquiry into the text is passing into a new stage, and it is partly for this reason that I hesitated just now to join my own voice to that of Bishop Westcott and Dr. Driver in petitioning for a gentle but scholarly revision of the Prayer Book Psalter.

I would not, therefore, have readers of the Psalms limit themselves to one translation, or to the opinions of one school of critics. Some specimens of my own new translation based on a corrected Hebrew text are given in the present volume. I may be pardoned for expressing a hope that readers will look out for the appearance of the complete work, and add it to their library of useful works on the Psalms. And upon the same shelf let the beautiful translation of the Psalms by Wellhausen and Furness in the Polychrome

Bible (a work of advanced criticism) have its place beside the hardly less beautiful, but much more conservative, translation of John de Witt (New York: Randolph, 1891), and the helpful and, from practical exigencies, conservative version of Dr. Driver, in the "Parallel Psalter." These three will, between them, give provisionally the best renderings, and even if the reader's selection of a rendering be guided by his subjectivity, no great harm will, in most cases, be done. I am no enemy of the imagination. It is God's instrument, and so long as we do not impose our own imaginative preferences on others, those renderings and those interpretations which commend themselves to our own literary taste may, for us, be provisionally the best. But I would still urge the importance of keeping the imagination within bounds. We must not, for instance, "find Christ" in passages which philological study proves to be unrelated to Christ and His religion. The longer we study the Psalter, the more we shall find that a strictly critical text, a strictly philological rendering, and a strict historical interpretation are, in the long run, the most satisfying. No Church can place itself above

critical scholarship, and the results of critical scholarship prove in the end to be as much feeders of the imagination and of the devotional spirit as those of a less critical scholarship were to the Christian men and women of past generations. It would be gross injustice to maintain that among the leaders of advanced critical scholarship there were no specimens of an advanced and advancing Christian piety, as fervent, as imaginative (in the best sense), and as reasonable as can be found among less critical and more conservative Christians.

The choice of new canticles will not be difficult when we have had a little practice in reforming our arrangement of Psalms. It is too important a matter to be taken up lightly or without experience. There is one New Testament Psalm, however, not composed indeed as a Psalm, and yet full of a lyric enthusiasm, which might, in my opinion, be introduced at once as a Christmas canticle with the utmost advantage, in lieu of the 45th and 110th Psalms, and that is the divine Ode on Charity in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Indeed, it might perhaps well be introduced as an optional sacramental canticle,

for it points the way to a sound and permanent theory of the Sacrament. Love is the most distinguishing quality of a Christian. It has to be gained by persistent effort ("follow after love," 1 Cor. xiv. 1), and the best way to obtain it is to have constant intercourse with Him who is the incarnation of love. Nowhere can the presence of Jesus be imaginatively realised so well as at the Lord's Table. Let us, then, go there to meet Him, and to learn from Him the secret of Christianity, which is love. Of "uninspired" canticles I cannot speak in a few lines. They exist, if we will but open our eyes to them, and, if technically uninspired, they burn, nevertheless, with a fire of no earthly origin, and it would be a proof of a special spiritual gift to recognise and to use them. In the closing pages of the Essay on Ps. cxxxii. I purpose to return to this fascinating but difficult part of my subject. "Psalms of the West" are surely not past hoping for, but the conscience of the community needs, I think, to be gently stimulated.

PSALM II

PSALM II

If we continue to say or sing the second Psalm on Easter Sunday morning, must not some relief be accorded to those who, with all their love for the Psalter, do not believe that it reveals a pre-established harmony with Gospel facts? We are now far from the day when Jerome could say that even to comment upon Ps. ii. after St. Peter was bold, the record of his judgment in Acts iv. 24–28 being authoritative.* The early Jewish Christian who composed the hymn referred to, and the author of the argument for Christ's resurrection in Acts xiii. 33, adopted the view that Ps. ii. was Messianic from their Jewish teachers, modifying the Jewish interpretation so as to suit the belief in Jesus. Hence, according to them, verses 1, 2, were fulfilled in the conspiracy of Jews and

* "Anecdota Maredsolana," vol. iii., par. 1, p. 6.

Gentiles against God's "holy Servant" Jesus, who was also the Lord's Messiah. The author of Acts xiii. 33 supposes the "to-day" spoken of in Ps. ii. 7 to be the day of the resurrection of Jesus, and so St. Paul himself must have thought, to judge from his language in Rom. i. 4. Of the references in Heb. i. 5, v. 5, Rev. ii. 27, xix. 15, it is enough to say that they help to prove the existence of a general Christian conviction that the second Psalm referred to the Messiah, and therefore to Jesus.

But there is one more interpretation which has not yet been mentioned. In Matt. iii. 16, 17 we read that when Jesus "saw the spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon him," a voice from heaven was heard, saying (according to an early form of the text), "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee."* The baptism of Jesus was, according to this ancient reading, His true birthday, and it should be noticed in this connection that Luke gives the pedigree of Jesus just before the baptism, and that the

* So the Codex Bezæ (D), and some MSS. of the old Latin. So, too, Justin Martyr ("Against Trypho," 88, 103). See further Tregelles's edition of the Greek New Testament.

Fourth Gospel gives the notice of John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus in speaking of the baptism, immediately after the statement of the Incarnation of the Word. It could easily be shown that this application of Ps. ii. 7 is a more natural one than that first referred to.

Apart from some of the details of interpretation, the early Christian and Jewish interpreters agreed in holding that the Psalm was Messianic. It was only in the mediæval period that the Rabbis denied this reference under the pressure of controversy. We must therefore attach great importance to the old interpretation, which, especially if the Psalm be written late in the post-exilic period, may conceivably be right. Let us then read the Psalm again from this point of view.

It is a poem in four stanzas which we have before us, and each stanza of the true text probably consisted of seven lines. The first stanza describes a rebellion of subject kings against their suzerain, the Jewish king, who represents the God of Israel and of the world (Yahwè). The poet sees the ambassadors of the nations speeding to some central city—say Babylon, and divines the thought which

fills their minds. It is a monstrous, impossible thought; for how can the false gods, already overthrown, help their worshippers, who ought by this time to have become fully reconciled to their subjection to the true God? The poet does not condescend to mention these false gods:

> Break we asunder their bonds,
> Cast we far from us their cords!

Such are the muttered words of the angry ambassadors. Obviously the nations have not yet been inwardly conquered. And yet the poet seems to think that they ought to feel reconciled. But surely, to expect cheerful loyalty from those who are only kept down by force is most unreasonable. The Psalm reminds us of the 18th, which is open (see verses 40–42) to the same objection. The hero of that psalm is the Messiah, as the leader and representative of Yahwè's people, who relates how he has won the empire of the world. Most probably a second psalmist, who knew the 18th Psalm, wrote the 2nd Psalm to describe the rebellion of the nations which the Messiah had conquered, and their renewed subjection. The later prophetic descriptions

of the Messiah and his age (see *e.g.* Mic. v. 7) are marked by a very similar sternness towards non-Jewish populations.

The second stanza relates how Yahwè destroyed the rebels. It is important to remember that, assuming the Messianic interpretation to be correct, the situation described in the second Psalm is imaginary. The Messiah is supposed in Ps. xviii. to have appeared, and to have crushed all who opposed his progress. But it is really Yahwè who did this, for how could a Jewish pietist, raised to the Messianic throne, have coped in his own strength with the trained warriors of the nations? And so when the spirit of independence flames up again, and the slaves of the Jews revolt against their task-masters, the poet of Ps. ii. represents Yahwè, in language suggestive of a thunderstorm, as affrighting his enemies with a wild laugh and angry words. The second stanza closes, like the first, with two lines from a speech of one of the belligerent parties:

> But as for me, I have set my king
> On my holy mountain Zion.

In the third stanza the Messiah appears;

indeed, it is possible to hold (and the present writer holds*) that the Messiah has already appeared at the close of the second stanza. He repeats a divine communication which consists of three parts—a declaration of the divine sonship of the Messiah, a promise of the dominion of the world, and a command, or at least permission, to rule the nations with a stern insensibility to pity. The opening words of God's message are, "Thou art my son," which implies, following Semitic analogies, the admission of the person spoken of into a society of superhuman beings, the so-called "sons of God" referred to in Job. The Messiah therefore can address God as his father, as being the head of this heavenly society. No historic Israelitish king could have done this. In 2 Sam. vii. 14 the words, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son," seem to be merely figurative, and, even were it otherwise, no one can maintain that Nathan's prophecy is really contemporary with David. Ps. lxxxix. 26 seems to be also primarily figurative, though verse 27 shows that the poet is partly thinking of Ps. ii. 7,

* Reading somewhat differently: "But as for me, I have been installed as his king on his holy mountain Zion."

where "son" has a well-understood technical meaning.

To illustrate this technical sense it is permissible to compare similar expressions in the Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions. Thus Ra the sun-god says to the Egyptian king Rameses II., "I am thy father; by me are begotten all thy members as divine," and Assurbanipal opens his Annals with the statement that the gods "in the body of his mother made him to rule Assyria." Of course such claims were not made till events had placed the king's right to the crown beyond dispute. The day of the king's enthronement was really that of his "birth" into the heavenly, supernatural community. So it is with the Messiah. His birth, according to prophecy, is shrouded in obscurity. It is for God to find him out, and then to give him all that he requires for the discharge of his functions. The Messiah cannot, like the king of Assyria, "seize the riches of the peoples like a nest" (Isa. x. 14); he makes known his request to his Father, and Yahwè will lay the peoples prostrate beneath him. The immediate government of the nations is then resigned to the Messiah, who may, if he

thinks fit, treat his stiff-necked subjects with utmost severity.

Here the divine oracle ceases. Nothing is said of the spirit of wisdom with which a lofty prophetic poet endows the Messiah; nothing of that important section of the Gentile world which other Biblical writers declare to be susceptible of true religion. It is strange at first sight that the divine oracle should be given out of chronological order. Apparently it is introduced to show the inexcusableness of the rebellion. The kings are supposed to have been acquainted with the oracle, so that to make an insurrection against the Messiah and his people was, to the Jewish poet, a proof of incorrigible wickedness.

But the Psalmist softens his tone as he approaches the conclusion. He appeals to the kings who will be alive in the Messianic age to take his message to heart. His advice to them is to become the true servants of Yahwè and his Son, and, if the received text is correct, to make their fear a stepping-stone to joy. How this transformation of fear is to be effected is by no means plain, and it will be a relief to many lovers of the

Psalter if the explanation of the growth of the present very improbable reading of verse 11*b* and verse 12*a*, already proposed by the writer,* should be judged to be sound, viz., that it is due to mistakes and misunderstandings of the scribes. In this case the right reading of verses 11 and 12 will be—

> Become subject to Yahwè with fear,
> And do homage to him with trembling,
> Lest he become angry, and, your course half-done, ye perish;
> For soon his anger kindles,
> Happy all those that take refuge in him!

Certainly a reference to the Son in this last stanza would be altogether unexpected; the words "lest he be angry," &c., obviously allude to the description in verse 5 of the wrathful scattering of his foes by Yahwè. In both stanzas it is as an angry God that Yahwè is brought before us—a God to be feared by all those who have not yet learned to "hide themselves in the shadow of his wings."

And now let us return to the question with which we started. Can we, as we sing this Psalm on Easter Day, apply any part of

* "Jewish Religious Life after the Exile," p. 112.

it to the resurrection of our Lord? If not, may we apply the seventh verse to His baptism? And apart from this can we engraft any Christian ideas upon it? Veracity compels us to ask these questions, and we are encouraged by the frankness (*παρρησία*) with which Jesus Himself criticised the traditional interpretations of the Law. First, then, as to the application of verse 7 to the resurrection of Jesus, which is ascribed to St. Paul in Acts xiii. 33. The apostle may quite well have so applied the passage because he assures us in Rom. i. 4 that it was by the resurrection of the dead that Jesus Christ was "marked out" as the Son of God with power. The assumption is that Jesus was not in the same full sense a Son of God during His earthly career as He was after His departure. In His earlier stage He was only able to attach a few individuals of one people to His cause, whereas now that He had been glorified, He was beginning to gather together in the Church all who were "called according to God's purpose" among all nations. The effective work, therefore, of the Messiah began when the Spirit of Christ took the place of the visible

Son of Man. This view was perfectly natural to St. Paul, whose thoughts were centred in the glorified Jesus, and who may consequently have underestimated the importance of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. It is not so natural for us, nor is it in accordance with the spirit of the Psalmist, who certainly thought of an earthly, not of a heavenly Messiah.

The application of verse 7 to the baptism of Jesus is probably more ancient and certainly more natural than that which we have been considering. If the Lord became conscious of a Messianic call at the opening of His ministry—that is, if He already felt it allowable to combine the two prophetic pictures of the Messianic King and of the poor and afflicted Servant of Yahwè, and to apply both to Himself—it is certain that the words, "Thou art my son," would be borne in upon His mind as well as "Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom I am well pleased" (Isa. xlii. 1). So at any rate the early Christians felt, and the same idea lies at the root of that fine Hebraistic prayer:

"Lord, thou art he that hast made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is therein,

who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine vain things?"

For if it was in the last scene of the life of Jesus that these words were realised, it follows that those other words of the Psalmist,

> He said to me, Thou art my Son,
> This day have I begotten thee,

must find their verification in some earlier event in the Gospel story—*i.e.*, in the baptism.

Yes; the early Christians may be right. It is psychologically probable that Jesus passed through a spiritual crisis at the opening of His career, and that His emerging from that crisis was marked by a new disclosure of His filial relation to God. We will not deny that the childhood and early manhood of Jesus must have been beautiful; of this we have no sufficient evidence, but we could believe it even without evidence. We have, however, traditional evidence that Jesus was believed to have passed through such a crisis as I have referred to, and the spiritual change in Him which ensued was a very thorough one. For the dove lighting upon

Jesus corresponds to the brooding of the Divine Spirit upon the waters of chaos (Gen. i. 2), and is the symbol of a new creation. And where are the words which would more fitly describe the consciousness of a newly created soul than these :

> He hath said to me, Thou art my Son;
> This day have I begotten thee.

I will not claim for this idea a higher praise than that of appropriateness. For the narrative of the Baptism and the Temptation is not to be handled by the scientific historian. It is the attempt of disciples to imagine scenes of which their Master would never have talked. But since we also are disciples, we are not forbidden to take up this truly congenial idea of our predecessors. So then I am of opinion that as we read the seventh verse of Ps. ii. we may, at least in the congregation, fitly think of the early spiritual crisis of Jesus, and call to mind that wondrous equipment with the Divine Spirit which lifted Him above the greatest of His race, and baffles the powers of language worthily to describe.

But it should be remembered that Jesus,

if He so applied these words, gave them a sense not intended by the original writer. It is not admission into a superhuman company which Jesus must have claimed, but a moral sense of oneness with God. And we are not surprised to find a difficulty in applying the rest of the Psalm in a Christian sense. It is true that no hostile conspiracy can ever destroy truth and goodness; true again, that absorption in the thought of God gives a sure refuge from trouble, so that the opening and the closing words easily become Christianised. But what of the middle portion? Surely the sternness of it can only be justified if the heathen are thoroughly bad. That the Jews often held this belief is intelligible and excusable; but how can any of us hold it? The tone of the Psalm as a whole is almost unmitigatedly un-Christian. "Know ye not what manner of spirit ye are of," when ye take these words into your lips, O ye church-going Christians? How can ye account to your Master for such a plain deviation from the straight Christian course?

Reference has been made above to the combination of the prophecies of the King and of Yahwè's Servant pre-supposed by the

Messianic claims of Jesus. We can hardly doubt that He assumed the title of Messiah under protest, and made it clear to His nearest disciples that He meant by that title something very different from what the Jews, not unnaturally, supposed to be the true meaning. And it is an interesting fact that in the very prayer or hymn which interprets verses 1 and 2 of Ps. ii. of Jesus Christ, He receives the title, not of God's Son, but of His Servant. "Of a truth, against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together." And again, "Grant . . . that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy Servant Jesus." That is what Jesus Christ according to the Synoptic Gospels was —God's faithful agent in the working out of His great purposes. With those purposes He had an acquaintance as intimate as, within the necessary limitations, it was possible to have. So that to His disciples it was as if one fresh from the courts of heaven had appeared on earth, as if the vision of a son of David, who was a Wondrous Counsellor and a Mighty God, were realised in Jesus. But

He Himself delighted most, we may be sure, in the portraiture of the Servant. From this He drew spiritual nourishment, and so became our example. A king is too great to copy, but for a Son of Man, who loved us better than Himself—for Him we can live, and looking unto Him we can die. A David could not fascinate us; a Son of Man can mould us like wax, and "give us the right to become the sons of God" (John i. 12).

PSALM XIX

PSALM XIX

THIS Psalm is appointed in the Prayer Book for use on Christmas morning, and in the Sarum Breviary for Ascension Day and Trinity Sunday. Evidently the compilers assumed that, since all the Bible has but one author—the Holy Spirit—phrases out of one document may be used to explain a phrase in another document, which to modern eyes may appear to be of a different literary class and historical period. Hence, when the sun is said (verse 5) to be like a bridegroom, they explained this by passages like Eph. v. 25, and came to the conclusion that the Psalmist wished us to rise from the thought of the sun in the sky to that of Jesus Christ who "came forth from his chamber," as on Christmas Day, to unite the Church to Himself in mystic wedlock. And since in Ps. ii. 8 a divine Son receives the promise of

the utmost parts of the earth, and in Ps. xix. 6 the sun is said to "go forth from the end of the heavens," &c., they put the two passages together, and inferred that the latter passage refers to the commencement of those missions to the heathen which were a consequence of the ascension of Jesus. So the psalm became an Ascension Day Psalm. Lastly, since verses 1–4 speak of God as the Creator; verses 5, 6 (*ex hypothesi*) of Jesus Christ as the Church's Bridegroom; and verses 7–14 of the Church's sanctification, which seemed to imply a belief in the Holy Spirit, the 19th Psalm was appointed to be used on Trinity Sunday.

Is there no better Biblical justification for the appointment than this? No; how should there be? The early Christians, in interpreting the Old Testament, followed the lead of the Jews, and the Jews have never regarded the 19th Psalm as Messianic. St. Paul does, indeed, on one occasion (Rom. x. 18) quote verse 4*a*, but only as any of us might quote a passage of Shakespeare, giving it a wider interpretation. Little did he dream that his application of an isolated passage of a non-Messianic Psalm would be made a

reason for appointing the 19th Psalm to be recited on the birthday of the Christian Messiah.

Now comes the searching question, Can we join in the recitation of this Psalm on Christmas Day? A Rationalist of the old school would of course answer, No. A Rationalist of the new school answers, Yes. If we had to make a new selection of psalms for Christmas Day we should certainly introduce it with the 19th. It is permissible to sing proper Psalms on festival days, if the Christian application is a perfectly natural one. In the case of the second Psalm, indeed, the justification is but slender. But to apply the 19th Psalm to the Christmas festival is perfectly legitimate, providing that we dismiss from our minds the uncritical arguments by which our predecessors supported that application.

The 19th Psalm is, in some respects, one of the most interesting in the Psalter. It reminds us of those cathedrals which lack architectural unity but are all the more interesting to historical students. Looking at verses 6 and 7, we see that they are quite unconnected. Verse 6 speaks of the sun as

starting on his course at one end of the sky and winding along to the other end, and as warming everything with his rays; verse 7 of the perfection and the trustworthiness of the Law of Yahwè, which refreshes the inner man and gives wisdom to the simple. The true explanation is that the editors of Hebrew as well as of Arabic poems sometimes combined passages from different Psalms, either because those passages were fragmentary, and could best be preserved by being united, or for some less obvious reason. The 108th Psalm is a conspicuous instance of this; it so happens that we have the two passages of which this Psalm is composed in other forms (viz. in Ps. lvii. 7–11 and lx. 5–12). The two parts of Ps. xix. do not, it is true, occur elsewhere in the Psalter. But the fact that they are composed in entirely different metres shows that they were not originally intended to be combined in sequence.

The two parts of Ps. xix. must, therefore, be taken separately. After enjoying them as independent works, we can compare them, and search for the special object which the ancient editor may have had in bringing

them together. The first part of the Psalm is a fragment of a noble hymn to the Creator. It deals, not in abstract phraseology, but in the concrete expressions of poetical symbolism. It is at once akin to and different from those hymns to the Sun-god which form part of the religious literature of the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Indians. It by no means avoids phrases of mythological origin; in this respect it is parallel to the Assyrian hymns. It speaks of the sun, for instance, as running on his "road" (an Assyrian phrase) like one of the legendary giants; the word "giant" is happily retained in the Prayer Book version from the Septuagint, and either "giant" or "hero" best suits the colouring of the passage. It is the same idea which finds expression in the mythical "horses of the sun." But the sun is only referred to as the central figure of the complex heavenly system. It is the message of the heavens for which we have to listen, and that message bids us look further to a Glorious One above them, who has placed the sun on high to fulfil His will.

But why is it said that the heavens "*declare* the glory of God"? Because, according to

the primitive belief, the fields of the sky are neither dead nor silent. They are filled with shining forms which were thought to be either animated beings or the abodes of divinities. There is a vestige of the former idea in Gen. i. 14–19, where the creation of the heavenly bodies is placed between that of vegetation and that of the fishes and the birds; by this arrangement the prejudices of many readers were soothed. And there is more than a faint trace of the latter idea in Job xxxviii. 7:

> When the morning stars sang together,
> And all the sons of God shouted for joy.

And another primitive idea—the pre-existence of the days (*cf.* Job iii. 1–9)—is traceable in the line, "Day unto day pours forth speech," *i.e.* each day as it arrives receives from its predecessor the burden of the old and yet ever-new song, "Glory to God in the highest." But day and night are inseparable; the night too must have had a pre-existence, and share in the work of publishing God's glory. The night has its own language; it speaks through the brilliant moon (Job xxxi. 26) and the in-

numerable stars (Isa. xl. 26). "Night unto night proclaims knowledge."

One cannot help regretting that such a noble strain should end so abruptly, and that at the most interesting point there should be a clear sign that the text is incomplete, a line having been lost in the middle of verse 4, and a verse or even several verses after verse 6. In all probability that portion of the Psalm of Creation which originally followed verse 6 contained an invocation of Yahwè as the Creator of the world and the Redeemer of Israel, and perhaps a promise like that of the healing rise of the Sun of righteousness in Mal. iv. 2.

It is true, we have another hymn of Creation which is fortunately unmutilated—viz. Ps. civ., which contains a description of the true Lord of light, and a series of pictures illustrative of creation. But we should have liked another equally complete Psalm ; in fact, with our increasing knowledge of natural phenomena we need a greater supply of hymns of praise to the Creator, of hymns free from lower forms of religious sentiment, but made poetically attractive by some of those mythological symbols which cannot adequately be

replaced by weaker phrases. We do sorely need to have our sense of the divine in nature stirred up. Even the old Indian hymns appeal to some of us with a wonderful force, and we wish, but wish in vain, that we had more such fragments as Ps. xix. 1–6. For after all we cannot dispense with mythology, and study brings us to agree with the words of one of Schiller's personages:

> . . . a deeper import
> Lurks in the legend told my infant years
> Than lies upon that truth, we live to learn.

The following appears to me a not improbable reading of this fine Psalm. I have filled up by mere conjecture, and enclosed in brackets, the line which is supposed to have been lost, and appended what may be something like the lost conclusion of the Psalm of Creation.

> The heavens tell out the glory of God,
> The sky declares the work of his hands.
> Day pours out speech unto day,
> And night breathes knowledge unto night.
>
> Their sound travels through the whole earth,
> Their words reach the end of the world;

Surely there thou hast stablished chambers*
For the sun moving in splendour,

Who is like a bridegroom issuing from his
alcove,
And joys like a hero to run on his road:
At one end of heaven he comes forth,
To the other he pursues his winding course.

[On whom doth not his light arise?]
From his fervour nothing can hide itself.
[Thou, Yahwè, art my Light, my Sun;
With healing in thy wings arise upon me!]

Some of us would perhaps have desired the poet to refer to the calm sureness of the divine working, symbolised by the steady but silent progress of the sun on his daily path. Plutarch, that Broad Churchman of Greek religion, speaks of the Divine Reason, as "standing not in need of voice, but silently walking along, and guiding mortal affairs."† And certainly the contrast drawn by Carlyle between the quiet of natural processes and the fussing and fuming of men is full of instruction. But all this we can supply for

* On the chambers of the sun and the portals of the sky, see the Book of Enoch xli. 5, lxxii. The conception is of Babylonian origin.

† Plut. "Isis and Osiris," c. 75.

ourselves. It is the truth that God is our Light, our Sun, our Creator, and our constant Re-creator, which is the most fundamental one, and that which is of most general application. If to this we add the sister-truth that Jesus, or the Spirit of Jesus, has opened our eyes to see this Sun of suns undazzled, and our hearts to receive its life-giving warmth, we have that which we, as human beings, most need in a world of wonder, of beauty, and of awe. But then, in order to get all this out of the Psalm, we must not rush through it, but dwell upon each word with quiet insistence, which can best be done, if only we have at hand a Psalter, or two or three different versions of the Psalter, in those vacant moments which we so often allow ourselves to waste in the course of the day.

The Psalm of the Sun, of which we have a delightful fragment in Ps. xix. 1–6, is a parallel to the 8th Psalm, which refers, not directly to the sun, but to the moon and stars. Both imply the prominence of the idea of the creatorship of the one true God, which we know to have become vital among the Jews at the end of the Babylonian exile, and

which is very noticeable in the work of the second Isaiah. The latter part of the 19th Psalm relates, not to Creation, but to the Law. It reminds us strongly of the 119th Psalm, and like that Psalm—the earliest known Hebrew litany—expresses a tremulous conscientiousness characteristic of the period of heathen domination. The authors of Ps. xix. 7–14 and of Ps. cxix. must have belonged to that Church within the nation which calls itself in the Psalter "the poor and afflicted," and who were, at certain times particularly, loth to be tempted to the "great transgression" of apostacy.

It was a time when the oppressors of Israel (the "insolent") made it seem worth while to weak Jews to apostatise, or at least to assimilate themselves in some degree to their neighbours, and give up their seemingly arrogant claim of possessing a monopoly of truth. At such a time the faithful stirred one another up to the study of their great treasure—the Law, a term which meant primarily the narratives and commandments of the Law of Moses, and next, those prophetic writings which had already become virtually canonised. It is to this expanded Law that

another psalmist refers when he says of the Happy Man (Ps. i. 2) that:

His delight is in the fear* of Yahwè,
And on his law doth he meditate day and night.

The result of this absorption in the Bible was in some respects beautiful. Men were lifted above the depressing circumstances of the time, and not only resisted the temptation to apostatise, but felt a more than earthly joy in fidelity to their God. The priest fell behind; the student and teacher of Scripture came into the foreground. Men examined themselves in the light of Scripture and of God's providential dealings with Israel, and sought not for priestly but for divine absolution. And how seriously they took this duty may be seen from passages like this (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24), in which the speaker (as in Ps. xix. 12) craves for the divine illumination of the more obscure parts of his nature.

Search me out, O my God, and know my heart,
Know me, and know my deeds,
See if my way be crooked,
And lead me in the way of God.*

* Corrected text.

But a drawback too soon became visible; it arose partly from an excessive concentration on matters of conduct which is sometimes called Puritanism, partly from a persistent belief in the connection between physical and moral evil, as if misfortune were always to be accounted for by some real or supposed transgression in the sufferer. It is the latter which was the more serious evil. The calamities which came upon the Jews subsequently to the reorganisation of their people were inevitably traced by them, under the chilling influence of this belief, to some great unknown sins which no self-examination could discover. This tremulous conscientiousness is not consistent with the highest standard of character; it leads straight on to the spiritual despotism of a class of presumed experts. Let us be warned by God's voice in history.

Here is a new translation of the Psalm of the Law (verses 8-15):

Perfect is Yahwè's law, / refreshing the soul,
Sure is Yahwè's declaration, / making wise the simple;
Right are Yahwè's behests, / rejoicing the heart,
Spotless is Yahwè's commandment, / enlightening the eyes;
Pure is Yahwè's promise, / enduring for ever,

True are Yahwè's ordinances, / righteous altogether.
More precious are they than gold, / yea, than much fine gold,
Sweeter are they than honey, / than the droppings of the comb.

By them too is thy servant cautioned, / observing them brings great reward.
Who can discover failings? / from unnoticed (failings) acquit thou me!
Protect thy servant also from the insolent, / let them not rule over me;
Then shall I be without blame, / and guiltless of the great transgression.
Let my spoken words and my brooding meditation / appear acceptable
Before thee continually, O Yahwè, / my Rock and my Redeemer.

It remains to add a suggestion as to the relation of Ps. xix. to the services of Christmas Day. Regarded by itself, the first part of it may seem most appropriate for New Year's Day as a festival of Creation, and the second part for a festival of the Reformation, verses 7-11 being a eulogy of the perfections of the Bible. But when the two parts, originally distinct, are regarded as a single Psalm, they acquire a new and special significance. And the new significance is this—that the glory of God is

most fully seen in a perfectly harmonious human character. Bright is the manifestation of God's glory in the sky; magnificent is the varied splendour of sun, moon, and stars; but brighter and more magnificent is the picture which the Bible presents of the gradual upward progress of the human character—from the early aspirations of a David to the consummate attainments of a Christ, born "when the fulness of the time was come" (Gal. iv. 4).

That the authorities of the second Temple can have had this idea is of course inconceivable. All that they can have thought is that the Scripture is as perfect in the moral heaven as the sun in the firmament. But educated Christians of this age cannot rest satisfied with this view of the Psalm. The Scriptures, Jewish and Christian, are chiefly valuable to us as records of the process of development of the noblest types of character. So far as we know, there is nothing in existence worth as much morally as the human race, and the festival of Christmas, like the 19th Psalm, is a witness to this truth. For to judge of the human race we must contemplate its noblest specimens, and where would

our very noblest specimens be but for Jesus Christ? To a Christian eye, not only the Scripture, but the never-finished volume of history inevitably appears to point to Jesus of Nazareth as its centre and its Sun, "from whose fervour nothing can hide itself."

PSALM XXI

PSALM XXI

THIS is one of the Psalms for Ascension Day. Reference is made in it (see verses 1, 2) to a lately won victory (*cf.* Ps. xx. 4, 5, though "set up our banners" is quite wrong; read "exult"), and in verses 3, 4 a coronation or birthday festival may seem to be implied. According to Jewish interpreters, the king is the Messiah. The Targum renders in verse 1, "O Lord, in thy strength king Messiah shall rejoice," and, in verse 7, "Because king Messiah trusts in the Lord." There is some slight ground for this, assuming Ps. ii. to be predictive of the Messiah, in the parallelism between Ps. ii. 6 (especially if "I have set" be changed to "I have anointed") and Ps. xxi. 3*b* and between Ps. ii. 8, where the king is encouraged to ask for world-wide rule, and Ps. xxi. 4, where the king is said to have asked for everlasting life. On the other hand, the

applicability of this Psalm to Ascension Day is, even so, greatly impaired by the reference in verses 8–13 to an expectation of a renewal of hostilities, and by the awfully stern language of verse 9, to which no other real or supposed Messianic Psalm offers a complete parallel.

The question before us is, Can this Psalm be referred to Jesus Christ by thoughtful Christians on Ascension Day? We cannot, however, answer this inquiry without glancing at the question whether it is in any sense a Messianic Psalm. Of course, Psalms xx. and xxi. must be taken together; Ps. xx., it will be remembered, contains the words, "Now I know that the Lord hath delivered (or, delivers, *i.e.* will surely deliver) his Messiah (or, his anointed)." Of course this phrase might refer to the high priest, who is called "the anointed priest" in Lev. iv. 3, 5, 16, and, as some have thought, in Psalm lxxxiv. 9. It is less probable, though the view is supported by some keen critics, that the term "his anointed" refers to the people of Israel. Certainly the people can be spoken of as having been "anointed," *i.e.* consecrated, for the performance of Yahwè's high

purposes (see Ps. xxviii. 8; lxxxix. 38, 51; Hab. iii. 13).* But, in spite of the able pleading of M. Isidore Loeb† and Mr. Buchanan Gray,‡ it does not seem to be possible that the term "king" can be used as a designation of the people. There is, indeed, an important element of truth in the view of these two scholars; the Messianic King, as described in the later Old Testament writings, is no ambitious, self-regarding despot, but simply the head and representative of the people of Yahwè, and it is the people, with its head, which has received the inspiring call to bring all nations into willing or unwilling obedience to the true God.§ The "anointed" therefore is either the high priest, whom Philo, with correct insight, calls βασιλεύς, ‖ and who might in psalms be called

* See Wellhausen on Ps. xxviii. 8; Cheyne on Isa. lxi. 1.

† See Loeb, "La Littérature des Pauvres," 1892, pp. 106, 107.

‡ *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vii. (1895), pp. 685 ff.

§ *Cf.* Cheyne, "Jewish Religious Life," pp. 109 ff. This is becoming more and more generally recognised by critics.

‖ Cheyne, "Origin of the Psalter," 199 f., 218 f. It is perfectly true that it was only at the close of the Persian or the beginning of the Greek period that the high priesthood became an object of ambition as a temporal as well as a spiritual dignity. But Wellhausen appears to me to have shown that the union of spiritual and temporal power, so noteworthy in the Greek period, was in full accordance with the theory of the priestly code

melek or "king," considering that it was the conventional custom to make psalms with reference to a king, and that there was no other person with such a strong claim to be provisionally called the "king," or—the Messiah.

To Wellhausen the two companion Psalms (xx. and xxi.) are a mystery ("Psalms," p. 171). As to their period, indeed, he speaks with no uncertain sound; he has no doubt that they are post-exilic, like the rest of the Psalms, but he does not profess to understand their contents, which arises from his presupposition that they must have a reference to definite events in contemporary Jewish history. This presupposition, however, is a mistake. We cannot separate Pss. xx., xxi. from the other Psalms, in which the supposed historical references are proved by the newer textual criticism to be to a large extent illusory. No blame, of course, attaches to Wellhausen and others of the same school, because, as the received text of the Psalter stands, the references possess much plausi-

("Prolegomena," pp. 155–157). So Ryle ("Ezra and Nehemiah," p. xlix.): "After the break-up of the Persian empire, the high priest became practically a petty Jewish monarch."

bility. I venture to think that the more consistent Wellhausen and other textual critics become, the more they will hesitate to express as much confidence in their supposition of definite historical allusions as they have hitherto generally done. Conservative critics too, such as Prof. Kirkpatrick in 1891, will probably soon cease to look out in pre-exilic Israelitish history for some king, such as David, Asa, or Uzziah, to whom Pss. xx., xxi. may be referred.*

The two Psalms are certainly Messianic, but Messianic in a sense which will be new to most readers. The poet, speaking for Israel, looks forward with assurance to the advent of the Messiah, as the leader and representative of the people. This Messiah will go to war, but he will have no chariots and no horses; we could easily believe that Levitical singers are to precede the unwarlike warriors of Israel, saying, "Praise Yahwè, for everlasting is his

* Prof. Kirkpatrick, however, fully admits that "there is little to determine the particular occasion of these Psalms" ("Psalms" i.–xli., p. 107). The present writer has made the most of the few indications which may plausibly be found, and explained them with reference to Maccabæan times (see his "Origin of the Psalter," *l. c.*), but further study of the text has led him to adopt the Messianic interpretation.

loving-kindness" (Jehoshaphat: 2 Chr. xx. 21). The destruction of the foes is the work of God, and should they once again gather strength, it will be Yahwè alone who will deliver Israel and its head. Alike in Ps. xx. 6 ("Now know I") and in verse 6 and similar passages the speaker is the community of pious Israelites.

Evidently we can no more say this Psalm with satisfaction on Ascension Day than we can recite the 45th Psalm (rightly understood) on Christmas Day. All that I can suggest to modify the anomaly of our present arrangement is that it may well intensify our gratitude for the true Christ to see how different He is from pictures of the Messiah in the Psalter. Great indeed must be the change mentally introduced into Ps. xx. before we can imagine it to be an address to Christ on his way to crucifixion (Arnobius). Textual criticism, however, enables us to make one slight mitigation of the stern language of Ps. xxi. in the received text. Verse 9, which, as commonly read, anticipates that the enemies of the king will become like a "fiery oven," should very possibly be read thus:

Thou wilt make them as [thorns of the wilderness
In] a heated oven at the time of their punishment;
Yahwè in his wrath will annihilate them,
And the fire [of his zeal] will devour them.

The received reading reminds us unpleasantly of the terrible picture in Rev. xix. 20; the corrected one gives us merely a conventional figure for the annihilation of the wicked (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7). The emphasis is not on the mode of destruction, but on the fact. And the last stanza (verses 13, 14) should probably be read somewhat as follows:

For thou wilt make them as stalks of straw on high
places,
Which the wind chases before it.
Exalt thyself, O Yahwè, in thy strength;
We will sing and strike the lyre to thy might.

PSALM XXII

PSALM XXII

THE 22nd Psalm was appointed for Good Friday on the ground of four references to the Psalm in the New Testament, which appeared to determine the application of the rest. Among these references there is one which demands the most reverential consideration, because no one less than our Lord is the reputed authority for it. Let us look at the other references first. The 8th verse is quoted in Matt. xxvii. 43 (and the parallel passages), where the chief priests and scribes are represented as saying, "He trusteth in God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him." The 18th verse is regarded in Matt. xxvii. 35 as a prophecy of the parting of the garments of Jesus among the soldiers by lot, and the 15th verse, as well as Ps. lxix. 21, as a prophecy of His thirst. But these are only specimens of the early

Christian exegesis of the 22nd Psalm, which, as an old writer says, appeared to be not so much a prophecy as a history of Christ.

But what is to be done, it may be asked, if the critics are to be listened to, and if the Psalm is not merely not a history, but not even a prophecy, of the sufferings and exaltation of Jesus Christ? How can we honestly continue to use it on Good Friday? The question is one that suggests its own answer. That old writer meant to say that Ps. xxii. was so accurate a prophecy that it resembled a history. But it is of the essence of a prophecy of distant times that it should not be circumstantially accurate. Therefore if the 22nd Psalm fits the last great scene in the life of Jesus, it can only be because it is a literary picture of some other life which was only less great, only less wonderful than that of Jesus. Therefore we have but to change a word in the old orthodox account of the relation of Ps. xxii. to the Gospel narrative, and to say, not that the narrative handed down to us is a fulfilment of passages in the Psalm, but that it reminds us, as no other narrative does, in a remarkable degree of the Psalm. In a certain very true sense this may

surely be called a fulfilment, *i.e.* the words of the Psalm seem to gain a heightened meaning through being applied to the Crucifixion narrative.

Two things, however, must be borne in mind. First, that if we can recover the original meaning of the words of this Psalm we shall probably find that they are instinct in the highest degree with life and force; and next, that the applicability of the Psalm to the Crucifixion narrative is much less complete than old writers thought. Let us take the latter point first. It is merely a want of simplicity in our minds which hinders us from seeing the inferiority of the sufferer depicted in the Psalm to Jesus of Nazareth. It is quite true that, according to a tradition preserved in Matthew (xxiii. 46) and Mark (xv. 34), when Jesus was about to breathe His last, He cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" which are the opening words of the 22nd Psalm. But this fact, if it be a fact, will not bear the stress which the theology of our forefathers laid upon it. The words ascribed to the dying Saviour by no means correspond to His real feeling. If we wish

to know what the Christ really felt, we should read those words which are given, virtually at least, four times over in the Gospels, and the force of which by no means depends on the authenticity of the reference to a cross: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," and in the light of these words let us read again these words from the story of the Passion in the Fourth Gospel: "And he, bearing his cross, went forth unto Golgotha" (John xix. 17). We shall then not find it easy to believe that when the supreme moment came, anything but excruciating torture could have forced from the lips of the Lord such words as these, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

Let us turn to the context of the passage, which I will give in as accurate a form as with our imperfect critical appliances seems to me attainable.

O my God! to me give ear;
Why hast thou forsaken my soul?

* The decision as to the authenticity of the statement in Matt. xxvi. 46, Mark xv. 34 will depend partly on the presuppositions of the critic. No one, however, can deny that such an important statement as this required to be endorsed by the two other Gospels to have the highest claims on our acceptance.

PSALM XXII

[Why] keepest thou so far off, not to hear
The words of my cry, O my God?

I call by day, but thou answerest not;
By night, but thou interposest not for me:
Yet thou (alone) art Jacob's Holy One,
The God (who is) Israel's confidence.

In thee our fathers trusted,
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them;
To thee they cried, and found an escape,
In thee they confided, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm and no human creature,
Insulted by mankind, and by all people despised.
All that behold me jeer at me,
They open the lips wide, and wag their heads (with a scoff).

How is it possible that the opening words can be the deliberately chosen expression of the consciousness of Jesus? Was it not one of the chief truths which Jesus came to proclaim that heaven was not far off but lay round about us? According to one of the Gospels, Jesus said on a certain occasion, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always." This passage occurs in the Fourth Gospel (John xi.

41, 42), but it expresses the spirit of many passages in the Synoptic Gospels. Surely the pained surprise at not being heard which Ps. xxii. 1–8 expresses is contrary to the true "mind of Christ." Nor is it easier to believe that He who proclaimed the blessedness of the persecuted should have allowed His mind to dwell on the insults of His persecutors.

Let us now pass on to verses 8–12, which contain another of the passages quoted in the Gospels.

"His redeemer is Yahwè;* let Yahwè deliver him!
Let Yahwè rescue him, seeing he delights in him!"
Truly, thou wast my refuge in the hour of birth,
My confidence when upon my mother's breast.

On thee have I stayed myself from my birth,
Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb;
Remain not afar, [O Yahwè],
Trouble is near, there is no helper.

Can this part of the Psalm be applied to Jesus Christ? Certainly it can. Not quite in the sense in which the poet wrote it indeed. The speaker asks for deliverance *from* trouble. Jesus Christ, we know, asked

* Halévy's correction of the text. In the received text, "Roll," or "he rolled (it) upon God," is taken to mean "Trust," or "he trusted."

for deliverance *in* trouble. The poet knows only of one birth—a natural one; Jesus Christ, according to tradition, knew of a second birth, which took place when inwardly He heard these words, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee"*—a second birth which consisted in a wondrous intermingling of the human and the divine spirit. Still it may be gladly admitted that these words may have had a perfectly true meaning to Jesus. There cannot have been a moment in His life, since the full awakening of consciousness, when He did not look up to God as His God, and trust in Him for protection. Even as a child, through His love and reverence for Joseph, He must have paid true love and reverence to God. And certainly the opening words, quoted in the Gospel, are with much dramatic propriety applied to Christ's persecutors.

The next section (verses 12–17) contains a passage (verse 15) which may be alluded to in John xix. 28, and another (verse 16) which, according to one form of the text, has often (but not by the evangelists) been applied to the Crucifixion itself.

* See p. 38.

Wild oxen in their strength surround me,
With pointed horns they shatter me;
Fierce lions that raven and roar
Stretch open their jaws towards me.

[Within,] I am dissolved as into water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart has become like wax,
It has melted away within me.

[My palate] is dried up like grass,
My teeth stick together in my jaws;
With my crying my throat is parched,
And upon mine eyelids is the gloom (of Death).

As before, I give a corrected reading of the passage, because it enables us to get hold of the spirit of the poet better, and we have not the spiritual insight of Jesus through which no doubt He intuitively caught the sense of a passage in spite of the imperfections of the text. The words rendered in the familiar versions, "They pierced my hands and my feet," certainly need some alteration. Nor can it be said that the slightly better rendering, "They digged into my hands and my feet" (which is supposed to allude to the gaping wounds made by the wild beasts in the hands and feet of the sufferer) is at all a natural phrase.

But, apart from this, can we imagine Jesus Christ indulging in the self-pity expressed in this passage? Surely not. The words have indeed a beauty and an appropriateness in the mouth of the imaginary speaker, but would be sadly misplaced in the mouth of Jesus. Let us pass to the fourth section.

Greedy lions in their strength surround me,
A troop of wild oxen encircles me;
My flesh is wasted away by reason of my pains,
(But) *they* feast their eyes upon my sufferings.

They part my garments among them,
And cast lots upon my raiment:
But thou art Yahwè, keep not afar off;
Thou art my God; hasten to help me.

Snatch my soul from the young lion,
My life from the clutch of the greedy lion;
Deliver me from the mouth of the fierce lion,
Draw me back from the horns of the wild oxen.

Can these words be read in a Christian sense? Yes, truly; but not as the utterance of Jesus on the cross. With His intimate knowledge of the Scriptures He would certainly have found a more congenial passage than this. Daniel in the lions' den would have spoken comfort to Him. Nor would He

surely have given a thought to His cast-off raiment. Glad as we should be to follow our predecessors in their exposition, we feel that we have made a good exchange by adopting a more strictly correct view of the Psalm which enables us to do more justice to the character of Jesus.

The remainder of the Psalm contains no passage which early Christian writers explain with reference to the Crucifixion, and I shall not quote it at length. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, quotes verse 22 as showing that Jesus regards us as His brethren (*cf.* Matt. xii. 49, 50; xxviii. 10; John xx. 17). The quotation was hardly necessary. It is plain that Jesus did regard His disciples as His brethren; that was how He fascinated them. Nor can we doubt that Jesus did nourish His faith on the latter part of this Psalm.

We have now to give a fuller answer to the question, Can we still use the 22nd Psalm on Good Friday? But first of all, we must consider what the Psalm meant to the original writer. The great Jewish interpreters of the Middle Ages interpreted it of the Jewish people, and in so doing they

came very near the truth. For the Psalm can hardly be dissociated from Isa. liii., which refers, not indeed to the Jewish people as a whole, but to those pious members of the nation who formed a Church within the people, in virtue of their close adherence to the best Jewish ideals and standards. These "Israelites indeed," who are the "Servant of Yahwè" spoken of in the latter part of Isaiah, are collectively the speaker in many of the Psalms, and notably in the 22nd. They suffered much for their religious zeal, and it seemed to them at times as if the struggle must be given up, and as if the true Israel would soon become extinct. These are the circumstances which underlie the strong expressions of the Psalm; we must not, from an excess of realism, seek to get more, by doing violence to poetic symbols.

The first part of the Psalm is a complaint of highly strung sensitive natures, brought up on the docrine of earthly retribution, and surprised that they meet with the contempt and ignominy which are only worthy of malefactors. And the grandeur of the Psalm consists in this—that in spite of the terrible strain put upon their faith, this divinely

given quality does not fail them. Though God seems to have forsaken them, He is still their God. "*My* God," they say, "why hast thou forsaken me?" It is in this tenacity of faith that those for whom the Psalmist speaks are true prophets of Jesus and of His disciples. For Jesus, too, might seem to His enemies to have failed, and yet we see to-day that it was not He who failed, but paganism. And just as Jesus no doubt believed that His Gospel would be propagated by others, so these faithful Jews declare that all nations shall recognise the sway of Yahwè. It is this faith in truth and in Him who is true which conquers the world, and which we Christians of a softer age too often lack.

To say or sing such an exceptional Psalm as this once a month is hardly to be desired. But on Good Friday it is just the Psalm we ought to sing. The sufferings of the noblest Jewish martyrs were, in a perfectly natural sense, typical of those of Jesus Christ, and it was at the crucifixion of Jesus that the victory of truth was for the first time assured. For it was not possible that the life of Jesus should be a failure. His bitter death could

only be the midnight gloom which was the precursor of the dawn of a brilliant day. And the exhortations and assurances of the latter part of the Psalm *—do they not come home to us with fresh force, now that they have already in part been historically verified?

* It is probable, however, that verses 22–31 are a later appendix to the Psalm. The text is unfortunately very incorrect.

PSALM XXIV

PSALM XXIV

THE authority for the appropriation of this Psalm to Ascension Day is comparatively slight. The Fathers applied the second part to the ascension of Christ, and the Te Deum expressly addresses Christ as the King of Glory, but it is nowhere so applied in the New Testament. St. Paul quotes the first verse in 1 Cor. x. 26 to illustrate the liberty of a Christian to eat flesh which may perchance have been offered to an idol; but there is here no question of any pre-established harmony between the Psalm and any fact or truth of Christianity. The first two verses are a noble expression of the divine Creatorship, and on this ground, no doubt, the Psalm was used in the second Temple on the first day of the week, regarded as a kind of festival of Creation. But these verses are not at all closely connected with the sequel,

and the ordinary Jewish interpretation was a different one. The call, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," was taken as equivalent to the words of the prophet, "Prepare ye the way of Yahwè," in Isa. xl. 3, and the Psalm was considered to refer to the expected coming of the divine Judge of the nations.

The assignment of Ps. xxiv. to Ascension Day is doubtless connected with a serious mistake as to the characteristics of prophecy of distant times. Such prophecy, if the best attested of the more ancient prophecies in the Old Testament are our guides, was not circumstantially minute; the details were rhetorical or symbolic. That any part of Ps. xxiv. can be a prophecy of the Ascension is, from a critical point of view, as impossible as the analogous view of Ps. ii., which we have already rejected. The only possible question is, Can the second part of the Psalm be applied, without violence, to that great fact, not of scientific history, but of faith, which is described, in childlike language, as the Ascension?

Ps. xxiv., like Ps. xix. and probably Ps. xxii., is a composite work. Verses 1–6 form a psalm complete in itself, which may

be compared as to its subject with Ps. xv.; both Psalms, too, are of the same length. It is a description of the character of those whom God will recognise as true Israelites, true and worthy citizens of Jerusalem, the "righteous," who alone can safely venture to enter the "gate of Yahwè" (Ps. cxviii. 20).

Yahwè's is the earth and all that it contains;
The world, and those who dwell in it.
For he (alone) founded it upon ocean,
And established it upon (ocean's) streams.

Who may go up (to worship) on Yahwè's mountain?
Or who may stand in his holy place?
He that has innocent hands and a pure heart,
That allows himself in no base aim.*

He will receive a blessing from Yahwè,
(Yea,) a privilege from the God who delivers him.
Such is the class of those who are zealous for thee,
Of those who seek thee, O God of Jacob.

The opening stanza is the creed of true citizens of Zion. It implies first that there is a God who has revealed Himself under special aspects to special people, and that this self-revealing God is also the Creator and

* "Nor sworn deceitfully" is a later insertion which spoils the metre.

therefore the Lord of the earth and its contents. Here are two important truths, but the second is of larger scope than the first, and also is required for the due interpretation of the first. It corrects the narrow and incomplete view of Yahwè as dwelling in a little mountain in Judah. It is also the truth which really makes it worth while to seek to enter the presence chamber of "Jacob's God." It is the privilege of Jacob or Israel to have been brought near to "the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth." But who is the true Israelite? Jews by birth and proselytes alike need to know this. Do not let us pause on the naïve cosmological conceptions of the writer; his religious not his scientific ideas interest us at present.

The short creed is followed by a short catechism. It was of no use to put forward an exceptional standard either of aspiration or of performance. The standard of aspiration is to go up to worship in the Temple, not for the purely spiritual pleasure of communing with Eternal Goodness, but chiefly at least to obtain the assurance of protection and of a share in the promised Messianic felicity. And the standard of performance is,

not to devote one's life to the spread of true religion among Jews and Gentiles—in short to realise the prophetic description of the Servant of Yahwè—but to satisfy the primary claims of social morality. These claims are set forth in more detail in Ps. xv. But their essence is adequately expressed in our Psalm in the two short lines requiring innocent hands, a pure heart, and honourable aims.

It may seem to some as if this were a low standard. It would have been so, but for the extreme minuteness of the Law, as expounded by the Scribes. This minuteness had among other effects that of producing a scrupulous and chastened character. The writer who asks (Prov. xx. 9),

> Who can say, I have kept my heart clean;
> I am pure from my sin?

expresses the feeling of all pious Israelites. It was not the highest type of morality which was thus produced, but it was not a superficial one. And perhaps one of the chief services which this little Psalm can render us is to point the contrast between a character formed on rules and a character formed on great positive principles, and between a

morality which proposes a purely material reward and one which lays by far the chief stress on moral and spiritual recompenses. It is true, this supplies no justification for assigning this Psalm to Ascension Day.

But it is the second part of the Psalm to which the compilers of our Prayer Book would doubtless have referred. It is, alas! only a fragment of a Psalm. Not less than two stanzas may have fallen out at the beginning. What is still extant should probably run thus:

Lift up your heads, ye gates!
Lift yourselves up, ye portals of the Most High,
That the King of Glory may enter!

Who, oh who, is the King of Glory?
"Yahwè, the Strong One, the Hero,
Yahwè, the Hero in battle."

Lift up your heads, ye gates!
Lift yourselves up, ye portals of the Most High,
That the King of Glory may enter!

Who, oh who, is the King of Glory?
"Yahwè, the God of Hosts,
He (alone) is the King of Glory."

What does this refer to? The clue will be

supplied by that brilliant dramatic fragment, Isa. lxiii. 1–6, which begins, "Who is it that comes from Edom, in bright-red garments from Bozrah?" It is the final judgment which both poets describe. Yahwè, no subordinate agent, is the hero. He has himself carried out the sentence of destruction on the heathen nations who have made a supreme exhibition of their malice by assembling to besiege Jerusalem. It is a great warlike exploit, for Jewish ideas are still influenced by those far-off times when the popular God was a God of the storm and of war, and the description is marred, as it seems to us, by an unheavenly vindictiveness. I only quote it to explain the second part of Ps. xxiv., which, as it stands, is too incomplete to be understood. There are two fine ideas suggested by it which should interest us, and which were probably in the mind of the Psalmist. The first is, that however great the wrongs of the crushed righteous may be, they are sure to be redressed. There is a "year of favour" or "of redemption" (Isa. lxi. 2; lxiii. 4), when "the humble (in spirit) shall take the earth in possession" (Matt. v. 5). And the second is, that no human policy or contriving will

bring this year nearer. God alone will be the hero of this great revolution—God Himself, acting through the great personalities which He Himself raises up, will bring about the longed-for deliverance. It will be a "day of vengeance," but not such a vengeance as the prophet imagines. God will avenge himself on the foes of goodness by making them, at the cost of much pain to themselves, inwardly and fundamentally good. It is a remarkable circumstance that when He quoted Isa. lxi. 1, 2 in the synagogue, Jesus Christ, according to Luke iv. 17–19, omitted the words "and the day of vengeance of our God," which would perhaps have required too much negative as well as positive exposition for the immediate occasion.

Ps. xxiv. 7–10 describes the return of Yahwè to the Temple, in which, in some sacramental sense, He dwells. He is not said to be accompanied by the Messiah; another Psalm (cx. 1) gives a somewhat different description. Yahwè returns alone, because His arm alone "brought salvation" (victory) to him. In the poet's dramatic description He is standing, either before the gates of Jerusalem, which are called (as most

render the received text) "ancient portals," because so many centuries separate the poet's time from that of David, or perhaps before the gates of the Temple. There is, however, some probability that neither "ancient portals" nor "everlasting portals" is correct, but "portals of the Most High." Thus we obtain a point of contact with verse 3*a* ("Yahwè's mountain"), which may perhaps have influenced the editor who combined the two Psalms. Parallelism, too, is the gainer. For though the "King of Glory" might be supposed to be a Davidic king, yet the closing stanza shows us that He is really no less than the Most High Himself.*

The Psalmist imagines himself among the bystanders, who play the part of a Greek chorus. Carried away by the spirit of the scene, he bids the gates stretch themselves upward, for the form which he sees approaching is of no ordinary proportions. Then he hears from a bystander, who seems dazed at the sight, the perplexed question, "Who, oh who, is the King of Glory, of whom you speak?"—and, with a delighted emphasis on

* In Ps. ci. 3 Jerusalem is called "the city of Yahwè"; in cxviii. 20 the "gate of Yahwè" means the gate of the Temple.

each new title, he replies, "Yahwè, the Strong One, the Hero; Yahwè, the Hero in battle." And when the question is repeated by the same or by another bystander, he replies again, "Yahwè, the God of Hosts, he (alone) is the King of Glory."

It was not unnatural that early Christian writers (though not the earliest of all) should apply these words to that fact of faith—the Ascension, when our leader and hero was received within the gates of the eternal temple. And the application has the additional merit of being poetically suggestive. Aubrey de Vere gives these words to the dying Copernicus:

> Lives there who doubts that when the starry gates
> Lift up their heads like minster porches vast
> At feasts before a marvelling nation's eyes,
> And show, beyond, the universe of God,
> Lives there who doubts that, entering there, man's mind
> Must see beyond it far an entering God
> Flashing from star to star?

But not only may we follow these early Christians and apply poetically verses 7–10 to what we, in harmless simplicity, call the Ascension, but even verses 1–6 may, if we do

not mind a little subtlety, be used by thoughtful persons on Ascension Day. "God, being rich in mercy, quickened us together with Christ, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places" (Eph. ii. 4-6). Those who act upon this assumption, and have the ratification of their act in the Inward testimony of the Spirit, can apply the first verse of our Psalm prophetically to what may be fitly called the Ascension of Redeemed Man.

> Who shall go up on Yahwè's mountain,
> Or who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has lived his earthly life as seeing the invisible, and has in spirit followed his Lord beyond the farthest star—he shall find death not the cessation of life, but a passage to a higher stage of life in God. These are thoughts which kill all meaner ambitions, and which produce a sense of brotherhood among those who share them.

PSALM XXXVIII

PSALM XXXVIII

LET us take the 38th Psalm as a specimen of the Penitential Psalms appointed to be said on Ash Wednesday, and in the Sarum Use daily during Lent after the 51st Psalm. There can be no doubt who the speaker is. As in Psalm li., he is the people of Israel, which, though on the whole faithful to its God, is yet conscious of the infirmities of too many of its members. These two Psalms, and others like them, contrast with Ps. xxii., which has no confession of sin to make, and is the utterance of that association of poor and righteous Jews in the Judæa of post-exilic times, which neither bribes nor threats can draw aside from the strait way. "The righteous poor are collectively the self-sacrificing Servant of Jehovah described in Isaiah liii. They are the inner circle, the few really fine grapes

on the cluster. Side by side with them—observers of the Law like themselves, only not so strict; frequenters of the Temple, only not so constant—are the great majority of those who call upon the name of Jehovah. They are not perfect in humility, or in obedience, and are liable to be carried away by the evil example of the wicked."* Some parts of the 38th Psalm are well adapted to this "church within the nation," others are not; and it is this that explains the "striking parallels and not less striking points of difference between the psalm and the portrait of the suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah liii." of which Kirkpatrick and other commentators have spoken.

The present writer has taken much pains to make the view here adopted (viz. that pious but imperfect Israel is the speaker) acceptable to English readers in the case of Ps. li. He would venture to refer to the essays on this Psalm in a volume published in 1892.† The interpretation referred to is continually gaining ground, and is, in the

* "Jewish Religious Life after the Exile," p. 125.

† "Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism," pp. 165–217. (T. Fisher Unwin.)

form in which the most careful critics put it, likely to become generally prevalent. Certainly it enables the Christian reader to use expressions which would otherwise appear very unsuitable to an ordinary individual—so unsuitable, indeed, that some* have been induced to put them into the mouth of our Lord. As if Jesus Christ could have taken into His lips statements which in the mouth of an individual would shock us by their inconsistency! Take, for instance, the descriptions in verses 3–10 of the different sicknesses from which the speaker is supposed to be suffering. It must be admitted that, even if we interpret these descriptions figuratively, we can hardly apply them to the same person, even if that person be the pattern of a true Israelite, Jesus Christ.

On this subject reference may also be made to Robertson Smith's valuable work, "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," second edition, 1892, pp. 220, 440–442, to the present

* See, *e.g.*, Neale, "Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediæval Writers," vol. i. pp. 590–600. Verse 3 "is said by our blessed Lord of sin not His own, but borne by Him, as the scape-goat carried the transgressions of the children of Israel." Such glosses are quite out of keeping with the transparent naturalness of the Psalmist.

writer's earlier works on the Psalter, and to Prof. Driver's "Introduction," sixth edition, 1897, pp. 389–391, where, however, the learned writer, in his anxiety to adopt elements of truth from different sources, fails perhaps to do full justice to the strength of the so-called personification theory in its extreme form. Further study of the text of the Psalms will probably show that there are more Psalms of the nation, in the strict sense of the term, than most recent critics have supposed.*

The text of the 38th Psalm is by no means free from corruptions. A few of the verses most affected by critical emendation may be given:

5 My wounds are noisome, are festered,

. . . . .

6 Because of my guilty deeds I am bowed down,
I walk to and fro in gloom continually.

14 I am become like a man who is stupefied,
And in whose mouth are no replies.

20 They requite [me with] evil,
They persecute me in return for my love.

The most important of these corrections is

* German works by Smend, Beer, Coblenz, and H. Roy may also be recommended.

probably the last. Pious Israel is not persecuted because its aims are good. The Psalmist's point is that the Jewish (?) opponents of the pious observers of the Law have received benefits from them. This is one of the passages which may seem to some to impair the penitential value of the Psalm. And it is true enough that the 38th Psalm is by no means entirely penitential. But need we on this account decline to use parts of it when our thoughts are turned to the important subject of repentance? How can we profess, either as a community or as individuals, to be entirely bad? The occurrence of such verses as the 19th and 20th may warn us not to be unreal in our profession of penitence. Let us be contrite for national and individual sins of which we can justly accuse ourselves, but let us not deny that God has taught us much, and that we have not been altogether unapt pupils.

What really does impair the penitential value of such Psalms is this—the confusion which they imply between calamity and the divine anger. The Jews, when these Psalms were written, were no doubt "bowed down"

with anguish; the oppression which they endured made life almost intolerable. But were these sufferings really a proof of the divine displeasure? Certainly, the Jews did right to confess the "guilty acts" of inconsistent members of their community. But it was a mistake to say that Israel's "guilty acts had risen above his head," as if the extremity of Israel's sufferings argued the extremity of its sinfulness. It is perhaps not so much on Ash Wednesday that we can use the Psalm with most profit as when we are stunned by some great national or personal trouble. Then we may well learn from the Psalmist not to murmur, but to maintain the patience of hope, and to remember that even if Providence permits such calamities, yet God is all-wise and all-good, and that He is still our God.

> Yea, for thee, O Yahwè, do I wait;
> Thou wilt answer me, O Lord my God (verse 15);

for to wait on patiently is a true prayer, and an answer, audible to the inward ear, will be sent, even if the prayer be no more than a sigh; yea, "my sighing is not hid from thee"

(verse 10). The greatest of men and of nations need not regret the moments of adversity which have taught them the full meaning of prayer, or the humiliations which have stimulated them to rise on the wings of faith to spiritual heights undreamed of by the prosperous.

PSALM XL

PSALM XL

PSALM XL. is one of the proper Psalms for Good Friday. The compilers of our Prayer Book were of one mind with the liturgical authorities of the Latin Church, who followed the exegesis which was at that time universal. The appointment is chiefly due to a condensed quotation from verses 6–8 in Heb. x. 5–7. The unknown writer who quotes this passage says that the words were spoken by Christ, when He came into the world, to convey to us the assurance that sins are put away, not by the sacrifices of the Law, but "by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to a particular set of persons with needs, aspirations, and prejudices of their own, and, it may be added, with a Bible of their own. These needs, aspirations, and prejudices we do not altogether share,

and the Bible which we use is more nearly in accordance with the original texts than that which they used, and is being every year better and better understood. We have therefore to ask, in what sense, if at all, can we apply Ps. xl. to Jesus Christ, when we use it in church on Good Friday?

We have already met with some composite Psalms; the 40th is another specimen of the class. It is extremely difficult to believe that the same Psalmist wrote the two passages which I will now quote from one of the best of the recent translations.

[9] I have proclaimed thy help in the great congregation;
Lo, my lips I have not locked,
Thou knowest it, O Yahwè.
[10] Thy righteousness I have not hidden in my heart,
Of thy faithfulness and thy help I have spoken,
Thy kindness and thy faithfulness I did not conceal
from the great congregation.
[12] For sorrows beset me beyond number,
My transgressions are lighting upon me,
They are more in number than the hairs of my head;
My courage has failed me.
[13] Vouchsafe, O Yahwè, to help me,
O Yahwè, hasten to my aid.*

* Wellhausen, translated by the Shakespearean scholar, H. H. Furness. One of the most obvious criticisms which may be brought against this attractive volume of the "Polychrome

When the first part of the Psalm was originally edited, two Psalms (or parts of Psalms) which had previously an independent existence were brought together. Those who do not accept this view have to suppose that a writer can speak in the same Psalm, first as if he had just had some grand success, and next as if he had met with some great misfortune. The first part of our 40th Psalm is a song of jubilant thanksgiving, the second is a *De Profundis*, a Psalm of terrified supplication.

Let us now consider the first of the two Psalms which, as could easily be shown in a detailed commentary, make up Ps. xl. The speaker cannot be the Lord Jesus, who was born more than three hundred years after the Psalmist's time, or king David, whose moral and intellectual stage was widely different from the Psalmist's, or the whole human race personified (to which one of the best of the Greek Fathers * virtually assigns it), but a

Bible" is that it neglects the abundant evidence of metre in the Hebrew Psalms, and that it is based on a very imperfectly corrected text.

* Theodoret: "Spoken by David as a type of human nature, which has received the hope of the resurrection from our God and Saviour."

circle of pious Jews who delighted to call themselves "the poor and afflicted," because this title reminded them that from God they had had promises which were worth more than all the riches in the world. Who, then, is the speaker? Why, of course, this very association of strictly pious Jews—those of whom Malachi says (iii. 16) that "those that feared Yahwè spoke often one to another . . . and a book of remembrance was written before him for those that feared Yahwè, and that thought upon his name."

The Jewish Church, we may suppose, praises God for the mercies which culminated in the arrival of Nehemiah and Ezra, the one the great reforming governor, the other the great expander and propagator of the Law. It seemed as if, after the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire, true religion had been at such a low ebb in the land of Judah that God's people were lying in a pit of ruin. Strict Jews were few in number, and had but little influence on their own people, and the walls of Jerusalem were still unrepaired. Unexpectedly enough—if the whole truth has been told—the right man to prepare the way for a reformation was drawn forth from his distant

home and sent to Jerusalem. He rebuilt the walls, kept the Samaritans and their allies from making any attack on the city, and encouraged the minority of strict worshippers of Yahwè. Afterwards, from Babylon, which was still the headquarters of Jewish learning and piety, a devoted student and interpreter of the law, who had long been at work on its completion and adaptation to present wants, was forced to take up the work which no unaided layman could perform. His success was not indeed complete, but even so it appeared a signal proof of God's interest in His people. The Temple services, too, were lifted up to a higher level; psalms of an altogether finer type than the old ones were produced, and the congregation confessed with joy that God Himself had supplied the material for a *new* and more fervent song of praise. It also expressed its faith that many Gentiles would be struck by this change in its circumstances and feel the attraction of this new and strange religious product which met a want of the spiritual nature of man. Then the Psalmist continues (verse 4),

> Happy the man who puts his trust in Yahwè
> And turns not to the . . .

The words here passed over by Wellhausen as being "corrupt and unintelligible" have been corrected with certainty by other critics; they should be rendered "(And turns not to the) vain gods, and falls not away to lies." The couplet gives the higher reason for God's mercy to His people. It was not merely that they were in distress. It was that the Jewish people, in spite of numerous unworthy members, was sound at the heart. It was that the Israel within Israel had put its trust in Yahwè, and not turned aside to the false gods of the populations by which they were surrounded. In short, "the man" (verse 4) means "the people," *i.e.* the association of faithful Israelites whose voice is heard in so many parts of the Psalms. There is a similar personification in the third of the Lamentations, which opens with the words :

> I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath;
> He has led me and brought me into darkness and not into light.

This was the complaint of faithful Israel in its adversity. But Ps. xl. neutralises this by the opposite statement, "Happy the man

who puts his trust in Yahwè," *i.e.* virtually, "I am the man who has put his trust in Yahwè, and my God has rewarded me with a happiness which all other men may envy, but which they can hope to share by becoming proselytes." Then the Psalmist passes into the more ordinary mode of speech. Wellhausen renders verse 5 thus :

> Great things hast thou done for us, O Yahwè ;*
> Beyond compare art thou ;
> Should I wish to proclaim them, and tell them,
> They could not be reckoned.

That is, the God of Israel is not to be matched by any of the so-called gods of the heathen. There is no people which, after having been unmade by the conquering power of Babylon, has revived as the Jewish people has done, solely through its fidelity to its religion. And now comes the question of the return to be made by Israel to its God. Israel is no longer to be merely a people, but a "congregation," and it devolves upon each faithful Israelite to help in the realisation of this ideal. One essential duty of pious Israel

* Wellhausen omits "My God, thy wonders and thoughts," as a later scribe's amplification.

is rightly to show forth God's praise. What then is the most acceptable ritual? The question has now to be reconsidered by Israel in the light of its recent experience. Here we must be careful not to repeat inaccurate traditional views of history. We used to be told that Ezra came to Jerusalem and established the Law, which was soon afterwards strictly observed—so strictly, indeed, that when a greater than Ezra came, he had to rebuke his people for attaching far too much importance to the merest minutiæ. The truth is, however, that Ezra was only in part successful. A large part of his people he could not induce to observe the Law with any strictness at all, and there was at any rate a section of the Jews who felt much more drawn to Jeremiah than to Ezra, and who accepted the Law as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself—the end being the preservation of the outward sanctity of the Jewish people. There was, however, an inner bond of union between all true Israelites and their God apart (strictly speaking) from the Law—the bond of belief in certain high spiritual truths, which some, and perhaps many, of this class of Israelites held to be symbolised

by some of the prescriptions of the Law. It is this symbolic view of the Law which now begins to be represented. It may have missed the sanction of the highest ecclesiastical authorities, but it could not henceforth be uprooted. It is implied in Isa. liii. 10 (which is scarcely of earlier date than Ezra), and it is implied in passages of Ps. xl. (verses 6–8), thus rendered by Wellhausen:

> Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire,
> Burnt offering and sin-offering thou dost not demand.
> Mine ears hast thou opened
> By means of the book of the Law prescribed to me.
> To do thy will, my God, is my delight,
> And in my heart is thy Law.

In the olden days any great national event was celebrated by unusually large sacrifices. But this view of ritual was uncongenial to the pious Jews whom the Psalmist represented. One of them imagined Yahwè as speaking thus:

> I wish for no cattle out of thy house,
> Nor he-goats out of thy folds . . .
> Do I eat the flesh of bulls,

Or drink the blood of goats?
Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And pay to the Most High thy vows,
And call upon me in the time of need,
Then I will save thee, and thou shalt honour me.

These pious men prize the Temple much as the chief place where God meets His worshipping people, and where, in a sacramental sense, He dwells, but they value perhaps even more the "written roll" (roll of a book), a phrase paraphrased in Wellhausen's version as "the book of the Law." But the Law, to these holy men, included not only the Law, but the prophetic writings, regarded as supplementing and interpreting the Law. When, in Ps. i. 2, they pronounce the student of the Law "blessed" (happy), they mean by the Law, not only the Pentateuch, but the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets known to them. More especially Jeremiah in its expanded form appealed to them; they might almost be called the spiritual children of Jeremiah, because the words ascribed to Yahwè in Jeremiah (vii. 22, 23), "I spoke not to your fathers concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices: but this was the thing that I commanded them,

Hearken to my voice, and ye shall be my people"—these words, I say, exactly express their feeling. And when, in the same prophetic roll, they read, "After those days, saith Yahwè, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. xxxi. 33), and compared this with their own inner experience, they were encouraged to hope that the day spoken of had already begun to dawn, and that God was indeed writing His Law, not the law of material sacrifices, but the law of self-sacrifice and humble reliance on the mercy of an ever-faithful God, upon their heart, so that their obedience was not servile but filial, and their morality not that of rule and precept, but the spontaneous carrying out of great principles. All this was doubtless not so clearly perceived as experienced, but can hardly be expressed otherwise in modern speech.

The Psalms in which these religious ideas find the most forcible expression are the 50th, the 51st, and that which we are now considering. They are therefore to a lover of evangelical morality the most precious Psalms in the Psalter, and considering that the main principle of the morality taught by Jesus was

the spontaneity of truly good actions, we cannot help believing that these Psalms must have been among those which He loved most dearly. To Him, as well as to the writer of Ps. xl. 8, the Scripture was the chief sacramental means of grace.

So, then, this is the new and unprecedented announcement made by the association of pious Israelites, that its fixed purpose was to celebrate God's mercies to the people by a perfect obedience, as the only acceptable ritual.

> Great things hast thou done for us, O Yahwè.
> Sacrifice and offerings thou dost not desire.
> To do thy will, my God, is my delight.

Then pious Israel personified adds that he has "proclaimed God's help" (see above). With that freedom of utterance which seems so strange, but which proves his absolute trust in God, Israel reminds God that he has not locked up his gratitude in his own breast, but has sought to awaken the same gratitude in the "great congregation," *i.e.* in the community at large. The "congregation" is distinguished from the inner circle of entirely devoted servants of Yahwè in this

respect above others, that it needs to be stirred up to a more consistent course of faithful service, and the speaker of this Psalm, *i.e.* the circle of devotedly religious men, claims for himself that he has done his best so to stir up his brethren, and even ventures to urge upon God (as if God needed the reminder) that He too should not hold back His compassion from Israel, but should send the angels of His loving-kindness and faithfulness to be Israel's perpetual guardians.

I will now make a brief reference to the second of the two Psalms, or parts of Psalms, which together make up our 40th Psalm. If the text is correct, it is linked to verses 13–17 by a passage which is not very happily expressed, and appears to involve a misinterpretation of verse 11. Wellhausen renders verse 12 thus:

> For sorrows beset me beyond number,
> My transgressions are lighting upon me;
> They are more in number than the hairs of my head;
> My courage has failed me.

In verses 1–11, however, nothing is said

of "transgressions." Pious Israel evidently believes that the recent mercies of God are a pledge that He has cancelled the sins of the people, according to the prophetic saying (Jer. xxxi. 34), "They shall all know me, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." But it is not an editor to whom the passage which now stands as verse 12 is due, but a scribe, endeavouring to make some sense out of a corrupt original. And applying the same method which has answered so well in other cases, we can hardly doubt that the true text is :

> For floods pour into my very soul :
> I sink [into an abyss] where there is no firm ground.
> Those that hate me, unprovoked, overtake me,
> And I am not able to hide myself ;
> They are more in number than the drops of rain,
> My heart faileth me.*

It is true, this has no connection with verses 1–11. Probably too a few words besides "into an abyss" have fallen out. The opening words are among these, for we plainly

* The justification of this is given in my forthcoming commentary.

require something like, "Deliver me, I pray, O Yahwè, my God!" When the latter part of our Ps. xl. was written, Israel was in such sore trouble that, not his privileges, but his sufferings were most prominent in his mind. Words of bitterness force their way from his lips—words which we hesitate to repeat, except indeed (with an inward protest) in church. There is no possible way of defending them. We will not blame the original speaker, who fears for the future of the true religion. But still less dare we praise him.

Then his mood softens. He has got rid of the "perilous stuff" which has burdened him, and looks away from himself to God. The conclusion is rendered thus in the new version of the "Polychrome Bible":

> Let all who seek thee shout for joy, and be glad in thee;
> Let those who wish for thy help say, "Praised be Yahwè!"
> I am wretched and poor;
> But the Lord will care for me;
> Thou art my Help, my Deliverer,
> Tarry thou not, O my God.

These last words help to reconcile us t

help desiring that when the Church psalms and canticles are revised, verses 12–17 the second part of Ps. xl. Still one cannot which have no real connection with verses 1–11, may be omitted. Let us now confine our attention to verses 1–11, which form a complete psalm, and ask whether this passage, at any rate, is fit to be a proper Psalm for Good Friday.

Let us, first of all, meet the objection that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who makes Ps. xl. 6–8 a saying of Jesus Christ, bases his view to some extent on a rendering of the Septuagint which implies a false reading of the Hebrew text. In the words, "a body didst thou prepare for me" (R.V.), the writer sees an allusion to the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all upon the cross. The received Hebrew text has, according to the Revised Version, "ears hast thou digged (or, pierced) for me," which is generally explained, "Thou hast given me the capacity of hearkening to (obeying) thy will." This, at any rate, gives us an idea in harmony with the context (*cf.* Isa. l. 4), and though such an artificial

phrase can hardly be correct,* we may acquiesce in it as a guess good enough to stand in a Church Bible, where the highest standard of critical accuracy cannot be aimed at. There is, therefore, in verses 6–8, no reference to the cross of Christ. But we need not, on this account, withdraw Ps. xl. 1–11 from the Good Friday service. For, quite unconsciously, the writer very accurately describes the ideal of the life of Jesus Christ, and it is this realised ideal which we celebrate on Good Friday. The blood of Jesus which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews really intends is not the material blood, but the life, the personality—that central power which expressed itself in all His thoughts, and words, and actions, and most completely in the voluntary resignation of His spirit to the divine Father.

And yet the mistake of the writer of the Epistle is one from which we may learn a

* A corrected text gives the following sense:

For sacrifices and offerings if thou didst care, / fat ones would I choose me;
Burnt offerings and sin-offerings if thou didst demand, / surely I would bring them.
Thy book is written within me / that I may perform thy will;
O my God, thy concernment and thy law / are in the centre of my being.

lesson. The poets delight in describing the absorption of a lover in his beloved. Wherever he goes he sees something to remind him of her: he hears her name in the whispers of the breeze; he sees traces of her beauty in the flowers. Just so, this lover of Jesus sees His name, or some feature of His life, wherever he looks in his Greek Bible. And we, too, if we are lovers of Jesus, shall look, not for the name, or for any feature of the outward life of Jesus, but for some glint of the splendour of His character, some anticipation of His heavenly ideal, in the best of the pages of the Old Testament. We look, and we venture to believe that, thanks in part at least to the new critical exegesis, we find what we seek.

For the ideal of Jesus was not altogether new among the prophet-people of Israel. The writings of Jeremiah, especially in their expanded form, which had so penetrating an influence on the early Judaism, contain some real anticipations of Christ's ideal; and still more clearly may we find such anticipations in the records of that collective and yet most real person—the early Jewish Church, *i.e.* the association of the "poor and afflicted,"

the "pious" (or, as we may also render "loyal"), which, as we have seen, is the speaker in so many of the finest Psalms. It only needs to be added that though the 22nd Psalm has still a claim to be a Good Friday psalm, yet Ps. xl. 1–10, though not equal to Ps. xxii. in literary interest, has an even stronger title to our acceptance, because of the classical expression which it has given to the truth which is an essential part of Christ's Gospel—that utter self-sacrifice is possible to man. We are told the fine narrative, which is partly at least allegoric, prefixed to the discourses in Job that the Adversary said to God that Job could not serve God "for nought." But the event proved that the Adversary was wrong. Job is a poetic anticipation of Jesus Christ, who, like Job, but without Job's murmurings, did serve God for nought, *i.e.* for no material recompense. Let this ideal be ours. It is better to be unhappy through a sense of insufficient attainments, than happy in a consistent adherence to the standards of the world.

PSALM XLV

PSALM XLV

THAT the 19th Psalm is a suitable proper Psalm for Christmas Day we have seen already. But can we venture to repeat the 45th on that day, as having any special applicability? It must also be asked whether it is natural and right to use this Psalm as a missionary psalm? Of course, all proper Psalms for high festivals must be to some extent appropriate missionary psalms, just because the religion of Him whom these high days celebrate claims to be a universal religion. But the question whether Ps. xlv. ought so to be used is more than usually pressing, because it was, and perhaps still is, one of the most frequently used at missionary festivals and a source of texts for missionary sermons.

Most will admit that a reference to Jesus Christ and to missions by no means lies on

the surface. If so we are bound to assure ourselves that we are not the victims of an illusion, because to force ourselves to believe, without proof, that there is a Christian application, fosters the habit of using words without understanding them. This is a moral fault against which, in the sphere of religion, our teachers do not perhaps sufficiently put us on our guard.

One of the most widely circulated English commentaries uses these words: "That Christ, Very God and Very Man, is the subject of the present Psalm, we know from the Holy Spirit Himself, speaking in the New Testament (Heb. i. 8, 9)." Now the Biblical doctrine is that all that is true and good comes from the Holy Spirit. Still there are, no doubt, different degrees and modes of inspiration, and we may thankfully admit that parts of the New Testament are in a very high degree inspired, and that all the other parts of it are lighted up in our estimation through their connection with these great passages. But we cannot grant that the occurrence of some very lofty passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews lifts up the rest to such an eminence that the results of simple

and natural exegesis of the Psalter can be disregarded. The author of the Epistle had no thought of laying down the law on the exegesis of the Psalms to all future ages. He tells us himself that he believed in the progressive communication of the divine messages, and was far from claiming to be Truth's absolute registrar and final expositor.

It is fortunate that even the commentator to whom I have referred does not venture to say that the Psalmist, under supernatural guidance, was thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "It is probable that in the first instance this Psalm, like the Song of Solomon, may have been suggested by the marriage of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter, the figure of the Gentile world. . . . The sacred writer was elevated by the Holy Spirit from the contemplation of an earthly wedlock to the spectacle of the nuptial festival of the divine Solomon with His Bride, the Church universal." "No objection," he adds, "ought to be offered to this opinion, on the ground that Solomon was a Prince of Peace and that the king here described is a mighty Warrior. This was doubtless designed for the very purpose, that in reading or hearing

this Psalm we should not think of Solomon . . . but should raise our thoughts to Christ, who is here revealed to us, by the Holy Ghost in this Psalm, not only as a mighty king, conqueror, and bridegroom, but also as God. The main point is for us to forget this temporary occasion of the Psalm, and think only of the typical application." A typical meaning can be found even in single words and phrases. Thus when the Psalmist speaks of the spouse of the king as "daughter," it is really "because the Church is Christ's daughter by faith"; "Christ is at once her Husband, her Father, her Brother, her Lord"; she is also called "glorious within," either because of "the indwelling of the Spirit," or because "in her virgin modesty, she sits arrayed in bridal attire *within* the palace, and waits in quietness, till she is brought to Christ by those who are sent to lead her to Him." *

Less than a hundred years before, a commentator, of equal rank in the Church, and, especially considering his time, a much greater Hebrew scholar, wrote these words:

"It is extraordinary that there should

* Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, "Comm.," iv. part ii. p. 68.

have arisen in the Christian Church expositors of great name and, indeed, of great learning, who have maintained that the immediate subject of the Psalm is the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter, and can discover only a distant reference to Christ and the Church, as typified by the Jewish king and his Egyptian bride. This exposition, too absurd and gross for Jewish blindness, contrary to the unanimous sense of the Fathers of the earliest ages, unfortunately gained credit, in a later age, in the reformed Churches, upon the authority of Calvin." "Upon the whole, it appears that in the character which the Psalmist draws of the king whose marriage is the occasion and the subject of this song, some things are so general as in a certain sense to be applicable to any great king of fable or of history, of ancient or of modern times. . . . But those circumstances of the description which are properly characteristic are evidently appropriate to some particular king—not common to any and to all. Every one of those circumstances . . . positively excludes king Solomon; being manifestly contradictory to the history of his reign, inconsistent with the

tenor of his private life, and not verified in the fortunes of his family. There are again other circumstances which clearly exclude every *earthly* king—such as the salutation of the king by the title of God . . . and the promise of the endless perpetuity of his kingdom. At the same time, every particular of the description . . . is applicable to and expressive of some circumstance in the mystical union between Christ and His Church. A greater therefore than Solomon is here." *

It is remarkable that orthodox exegesis should have varied so much in the two last centuries. Bishop Horsley thinks a Solomonic reference "absurd and gross"; Bishop Wordsworth admits it to be probable from a purely literary point of view. But both commentators agree that the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Prophecy) means the true Messianic king, Jesus Christ. Can we agree with either of them? Surely not. The 45th Psalm cannot be at once a prophecy of Jesus Christ and a eulogy of a contemporary earthly king, and if it were a eulogy of a contemporary earthly king, that king could

* Bishop Horsley, "Sermons" (ed. 1824), i. 76.

not be Solomon: so far Bishop Horsley is right. Nor can it be a prophecy of Jesus Christ at all—(1) because it has none of the distinctive forms of prophetic writing, and (2) because, apart from this, a prophecy of a definite individual, living a long time after the prophet, would be unexampled in the Old Testament. And yet Bishop Wordsworth, too, is not entirely wrong, for though one part of the Psalm (verses 3–5) reminds us of David, the rest reminds us not less forcibly of Solomon, especially if we venture to follow a corrected text. I am well aware that it is only through a detailed commentary that the following translation could be justified to scholars. Nevertheless the need of a correct translation is so great that I cannot withhold the results of long-continued critical work on the text of this Psalm, so far as the most important passages are concerned. The reader will notice that the famous passage, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (which in Heb. i. 8 is represented as presupposing an advanced Christological doctrine, as if "O God" meant "O Son of God"), disappears into the margin. This is absolutely necessary, both on metrical and

exegetical grounds. The poem is in six stanzas of six lines each (with two lines of appendix), so that if the words referred to were genuine, the third stanza would have seven lines. Exegesis, too, requires that the righteousness of the king should be the reason alleged for his being anointed with festive oil. The address to "God" (Elohim), or rather "Yahwè," is presumably the pious ejaculation of an early reader (*cf.* Lam. v. 19), suggested by the word "the king" at the end of verse 6. Here is the new translation of verses 4–13 and 18 :

4 Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O thou hero,
[Put on the garments of] thy glory and thy state ;
5 Yahwè thy God will make thy course to prosper,
Because of his faithful and righteous covenant ;
His [strong] right hand will conduct thee majestically,
[He will smite] peoples, that they fall beneath thee.

6 Those that hate thee, O thou hero, thine arrows [will pierce],
[They will penetrate] the heart of the enemies of the king.*
7 A sceptre of justice is the sceptre of thy kingdom,
8 Righteousness thou lovest, iniquity thou hatest ;
Therefore it is that Yahwè thy God has anointed thee
With festive oil above thy fellows.

* (Insertion.) Thy throne, O Yahwè, is for ever and ever.

[11] Hearken, O Egyptian maiden, bend down thine ear;
Forget thy people and thy father's house;
[12] For hearty is the king's longing for thy beauty;
For he is thy lord, [and his people thy people].

[13] Then shall they bow down to thee, O Egyptian maiden, with gifts,
The richest of [all] people shall sue for thy favour.

[18] I will recite thy name from age to age,
So that peoples shall magnify thee for ever and ever.

I have not thought it worth while to quote the whole stanza containing the words of which "the king's daughter is all glorious within" is a *corruption.* Beyond doubt, *pĕnīmāh*, "within," should be *pĕnīnnīm*, "coral"(?); verse 14 should become:

On her neck a wreath of coral (?);
Of gold-woven texture is her raiment.

The Egyptian (not, Tyrian) maiden referred to is the daughter of Pharaoh, spoken of in 1 Kings iii. 1. We are not, however, to suppose that Ps. xlv. was meant to be a mere poetical illustration of the narrative of the life of Solomon. What we have before us is a very strange kind of Messianic Psalm. The case is similar to that of Pss. ii. and

xviii. The poet is so convinced that the Messianic king will appear that he writes a psalm in readiness for him. And he describes the king in language modelled on the descriptions of David and Solomon. The Messiah will of course be a warrior like David, wise* and rich like Solomon. Like Solomon, too, he will marry a wife, for whose favour all will be fain to sue; this wife (accepting a necessary correction of verse 11) will be an Egyptian. The latter detail and also that of the royal harem (verse 10) is probably borrowed from the life of Solomon. But it is also just possible that the Psalmist lives under one of the early Ptolemies, when, in describing the good fortune of an ideal monarch, he would naturally give the king an Egyptian bride. And if we have to choose one of the early Ptolemies, we shall most naturally think of Ptolemy Philadelphus as the hero of this Psalm and the somewhat similar 72nd Psalm. Certainly this view is a plausible one.† It implies, no doubt, that

* Instead of "Thou art fair with more than human beauty," we should probably read, "Thou art wise with more than human wisdom." (See the writer's forthcoming Psalter.)

† See "Origin of the Psalter," 144–146; 166–171. Smend, in his valuable compendium of the history of Old Testament religion,

this Ptolemy was considerably idealised. But there were very strong reasons for idealising him at the beginning of his reign, and a Greek Jewish writer expressly says * that "philanthropy towards all men, especially towards Jewish citizens," was a note of the character of this king. We must always remember that there are two estimates of the heathen in the Old Testament, and that, according to one, the heathen may be real though unconscious worshippers of the true God. This estimate would certainly be the one preferred when sacrifices were offered at the temple for the welfare of the foreign king under whom the Jews lived.

I have myself been the chief recent advocate of the theory just referred to, but having seen more fully into the errors of the text I can hold it no longer. The Psalm is Messianic. But it is not on that account adapted for a Christmas Day church service. One painful reflection which we again have to make is this—that the benefit of being

seems inclined to this view. Wellhausen too agrees that there is no necessity to suppose that the ruler referred to was an Israelite.

* "Aristeas," in Merx's "Archiv," i. 260.

subject to the Messianic king has to be paid for very dearly. In Ps. ii. 9 the king receives authority to rule the nations with an iron sceptre, and in Ps. xlv. 5 the arrows of the king are described as piercing to the heart of the king's enemies. How strongly this contrasts with the first of the great prophetic descriptions of the Servant of Yahwè (Isa. xlii. 1–4)!

Another difficulty which we shall feel will be the low tone of some parts of the Psalm. It is true, the corrected text delivers us from the statement, "Kings' daughters are among thy dear ones." But the harem itself cannot be explained away, and the elaborate description of the royal bride is very unedifying. The allegorisers, it is true, have done their best to make it acceptable; the Churches of England, France, and Germany—all the national Churches—are to be the virgin-playmates who conduct the perfectly beautiful one, *i.e.* the Church, to her Lord, *i.e.* to Christ—a touching effort to pour new wine into old wine-skins, without the wine-skins bursting. But allegory has no place in such a poem as this; we must face the fact that the poet regards the con-

ventional picture of Solomon as not unfit to be applied to the Messiah.

On the other hand, there are some elements which are such as can be fitly called Christian. It is true, the Psalmist is an imperialist, and the empire of which he speaks has been won by violence. But the object of this violence is good; it is the substitution of a righteous for an oppressive rule. The words, "Ride on prosperously because of truth and meekness (and) righteousness" (verse 4) are hardly correct, but the passage on the righteousness of the king is undisputed, and gains by the omission of the difficult address to God which opens verse 6 in the received text. "Righteousness" is also the chief desire of the Christian disciples—"Happy are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. v. 6).

But what answer shall we make to the questions with which this study on Ps. xlv. opened? Is this Psalm fit to rank as a missionary psalm? And should it be read on Christmas Day? Clearly it is no missionary psalm; the true Messianic kingdom is not to be founded by violence. If we read it on Christmas Day, we ought to stop

at the beautiful words of verse 7, quoted in Heb. i. 8. And if even in the portion which we retain there are some less appropriate expressions, we must glide over them with an inward protest, and take care that they are counteracted in a far more edifying and charitable canticle which some gifted Churchman, will no doubt, if called upon, be able to supply.

PSALMS XLVI, XLVII

PSALMS XLVI, XLVII

THE Ascension Day service is adorned with that jubilant accession-psalm, the 47th. The Rabbis referred this song, with Psalms xlvi. and xlviii., to the times of the Messiah, the struggle with Gog and Magog, and the glorification of Jerusalem. The early Christian writers whose tendency was to Christianise such Psalms, *i.e.* to understand their fulfilment (for they, like the Jews, regarded them as prophecies) as already past, naturally explained all these songs of the wondrous achievements of the victorious Christ, and the 7th verse of Psalm xlvii.,

> God is gone up with a shout,
> Yahwè with the sound of a trumpet,

seemed to mark this song out as an Ascension Day Psalm. One is surprised that

Psalm xlvi. was not combined with it; for the words,

> He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
> He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
> He burneth the chariot in the fire,

would seem to the ordinary Christian mind to be fulfilled, germinally at least, in the first Birthday (viz. Christmas) or the second (viz. the Resurrection or the Ascension) of the true Messiah. A glance at Psalm xlvi. ought at any rate to precede the study of Psalm xlvii.

From a poetical point of view the 46th Psalm holds a high rank. I venture, however, to think that a careful study of the text with a view to remove transcriptional errors is well rewarded. The soundness of the principles on which our most consistent textual critics work is slowly but surely becoming recognised, and I will therefore offer to the educated lover of the Psalms the following new translation of a corrected text:

I.

[1] Yahwè is our refuge, (our) rock,
He has ever proved himself a help in troubles.

[2] Fearless then will we be, though the earth should quiver,
Or the mountains totter (and fall) into the ocean's midst:
[3] The sea with its billows may roar,
The mountains may quake at the insolence thereof,—
[4] [Yahwè Sĕbāōth is] on our side,
Our sure retreat is Jacob's God.

II.

Let the city of our God rejoice,
The holy dwelling-place of the Most High.
[5] God is in the midst of her; she cannot totter;
God will help her at the dawn's approach.
[6] Nations roar, kingdoms show hostility;
(But) he utters his voice; (then) the earth quivers.
[7] Yahwè Sĕbāōth is on our side,
Our sure retreat is Jacob's God.

III.

[8] Go, look at the wonders of Yahwè—
He closes battle-strife far as earth extends;
[9] He breaks the bow and snaps the spear,
He burns the javelins with fire.
[10] "Desist; assure yourselves that I am God,
(That) I show myself sovereign over the nations,
sovereign over the earth."
[11] Yahwè Sĕbāōth is on our side,
Our sure retreat is Jacob's God.

The reader may wish to be informed how

far that able critic, Wellhausen, agrees with this. But the hand of the "William Tell of critics" seems to have lost its cunning. He still retains the impossible "Chariots he burns with fire," and for the difficult 4th verse he has nothing better to propose than:

> A brook, whose waters make glad the city of God,
> Is the Most High in his habitation.

His comment on the latter passage is, "The poet has already compared the powers which disturb the world to the raging waters of the infertile sea. Adhering to this figure he speaks of God in Zion as a fertilising stream, bringing prosperity and blessing to those who dwell near it (*cf.* Isa. viii. 5 ff.; xxxiii. 21)." But what circuitous phraseology this scholar ascribes to the Hebrew poet! We need not quarrel with Wellhausen, or rather, with Dr. Furness, for choosing the word "brook:" it is a fine old English word, and the old translators seem to have thought it applicable in cases where to us it suggests a quite unsuitable mental picture. As to the burning of "chariots" with fire, it is not a very likely phrase. In Ezek. xxxix. 9 it is the weapons which are

burned—"bucklers and shields, bows and spears, pikes and spears." If "chariots" were mentioned, "horses" would be mentioned beside them, as in Mic. v. 10. Besides this, "chariots" is not the right rendering of the traditional Hebrew word, which rather means "baggage-waggons," as Canon Kirkpatrick and others have pointed out.

In the case of the 46th and 48th Psalms one cannot help feeling that a metrical English recast of the old Hebrew words might perhaps be desirable. Neither of these Psalms is free from serious corruptions of the text, and it is more permissible to glide over them in a poetical translation than in a prose version. The ideas of these two Psalms do not cause much difficulty, but the phraseology is sometimes obscure and improbable. Either we must carry out the principles of textual criticism thoroughly and consistently, or we must allow ourselves a poetical paraphrase. Luther, in addition to the prose translation attempted in his Bible, has enriched the Church which bears his name with a fine metrical version, and its intrinsic merits soon made it the battle-song of the Reforma-

tion. Some day perhaps some English poet may think it a worthy task to give us such a poetical paraphrase of the Hebrew Psalms as may meet the wants of the twentieth century. May that century not pass away without seeing a large fulfilment of the implied prophecy of the eighth and ninth verses! Many of the chief sources of national and personal trouble will then be cut off, and if it be true that Yahwè (the God of revelation) "has ever proved Himself a help *in* trouble," may we not expect that He will one day prove Himself more fully to be a deliverer *from* trouble, *i.e.* from one of the greatest of all troubles—the gathering of armed multitudes for internecine strife?

The 46th Psalm might surely, with much advantage, be substituted for the 21st Psalm as a hymn for Ascension Day. The 10th verse contains the words, "I show myself sovereign over the nations, sovereign over the earth." This is in fact the leading idea of the 47th Psalm, which is already an Ascension Day Psalm.

I assume here that the Ascension Festival will be retained, in spite of the difficulty of proving the historical fact of the Ascension.

Faith finds no difficulty in saying that Christ Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. The Jewish "Church" affirmed that Israel in the Messianic age would be set at the right hand of Yahwè; how can we say less of Him who is to us the root of the greater—the spiritual Israel? And if so, must we not feel able to say on Ascension Day a Psalm like the 47th, in spite of the fact that it contains no reference to the Messiah? Of course the 5th verse does *not* furnish us with such a reference; apart from other considerations, the context shows clearly enough that this passage is not a prophecy of the Ascension. But the successes of Christ and of His divine Father are the same; when God visibly assumes His throne, the revealer of the Father and the subduer of all hearts must assume a throne which cannot be separate from God's throne. I should not myself like to lay any stress whatever on the language of verse 5, but those who are less preoccupied than I am by the demands of strict exegesis are not debarred, in my opinion, from *applying* the words to the Ascension of Christ. But the essential feature of the Psalm is something far more

important—it is the impassioned declaration that all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the one true, righteous, self-revealing God.

Honesty, however, compels me here to mention a result to which I have been unexpectedly led, and which, if accepted, means the abandonment of the ostensible ground for the assignment of this Psalm to Ascension Day. Instead of "God is gone up with a shout," &c., we should, I believe, give (following a corrected text):

> Praise ye God with shouts,
> Yahwè to the sound of the horn.

But verse 8 still remains untouched even in my version, except that I venture to prefer the rendering:

> God has begun his reign over the nations;
> He has seated himself upon his holy throne.

That is all that faith requires for its daily food—the conviction that a time will come when the powers of evil will be so weakened and restrained that the kingdom of heaven can be said to be of world-wide extent, and the session of God upon His holy throne to

be universally recognised. Those who can believe more than this can doubtless produce delightful imaginative pictures of the future, but a simpler food is not insufficient for the primary needs of the moral life.

PSALM XLVIII

PSALM XLVIII

THE 48th Psalm is a Whit Sunday Psalm. How the Rabbis understood it we have seen already. The early Christian writers, regarding Zion as a type of the Church, Christianised it, and since (as Acts iv. 26, 27 suggests) the gathering together of the hostile nations against Zion, spoken of in prophecy, was regarded as referring to the confederacy of the Jews and Romans against Jesus, and the gift of the Spirit celebrated on Whit Sunday was the first royal act of the victorious Christ, they assumed that the author of the 48th Psalm was carried beyond himself and prophesied of the Pentecostal wonder. Theodore of Mopsuestia, however, whom Canon Liddon regarded with a very natural suspicion, but who really laid the foundation of a reformed Christian exegesis of the Scriptures, explained the Psalm of

Hezekiah's deliverance from the Assyrians, and this view has found much acceptance in modern times; Bishop Perowne and Canon Kirkpatrick are among its English supporters. The present writer, at one time, also held it, but for reasons which have been given elsewhere has long regarded it as certainly post-exilic. He fully admits that the Psalmist had Hezekiah's deliverance in his mind, but thinks that the poet was looking forward to the great future deliverance, when kings would, on a grander scale, be gathered together, and when panic terror would scatter them, so soon as they set eyes on Zion. Obviously, there can be no difficulty in applying this Psalm to the fortunes of the Church of God. Again and again true religion and its earthly defenders have been in danger, and again and again they have been helped, and still the precious jewel sparkles, lightening the darkness of the world. For the sake of this jewel even the earthly casket may be pronounced beautiful, and the supernatural security which God has granted to the former may fitly be predicated of the latter. Who can fear for the true Church, or for any true member of the Church, who realises the

power of faith—that wonderful link between God and man, which is the rock on which the true Zion—the true Church—is founded? And so, inaccurate as the translation may be—because based on a corruption of the text—we can yet, with deep earnestness, sing the words which have so long existed in the Church-Psalters derived from the received Hebrew text:

> For this God is our God for ever and ever;
> He will be our guide even unto death.

The only drawback to our pleasure in the use of the Psalm is the underlying idea that God will overcome His enemies by His superior might. A fervent believer in a God "whose nature and whose name is love" must believe that persuasion is the means which will ultimately overcome the resistance of all moral beings. But in the case of Ps. xlviii. the drawback is not a serious one, because the expressions which imply the use of material force can so easily be spiritualised. It is otherwise in the case of Psalms like the 2nd and the 18th; we can hardly show dutiful obedience to the Church's rule that these Psalms should be

regularly said in public worship without using much subtlety in explaining them away.

It is also fortunate that the 48th is poetically one of the finest of the Psalms. A hymn which has poetical merit is not necessarily popular, but when it attains the popularity which it deserves, it is one of the Church's most precious possessions. The text of Ps. xlviii. is more corrupt than that of Ps. xlvi.; perhaps for this reason it ranks below Ps. xlvi. in the affections of the congregation. Not without hesitation I offer a translation which differs, in some points rather widely, from the current ones. It represents a revised text, and my effort has been rather to bring out the true sense than to polish off rough corners.

I.

[1] Great is Yahwè, and highly to be praised
In the city of our God;
[2] His wondrous deeds [in] his holy mountain
Are the joy of the whole earth.

II.

Let Mount Zion rejoice and exult,
City of the great King;
[3] In the towers thereof has Yahwè
Revealed himself as a sure retreat.

PSALM XLVIII

III.

4 For behold, the kings combined,
They banded together;
5 When they saw its castles, they were amazed,
In wild alarm they fled.

IV.

6 Shuddering seized them, and horror,
Agony as of one in travail;
7 With an east wind thou wreckest
The purposes of the wicked.

V.

8 As we have heard, so do we see
In the city of Yahwè Sĕbāōth;
The city of our God doth Yahwè
Stablish for evermore.

VI.

9 Hail to thy loving-kindness, O Yahwè,
In the midst of thine assembly!
10 Thy famous deeds I will cause to be praised
Far as earth extends.

VII.

11 Full of justice is thy right hand,
(Well) may Mount Zion rejoice!
(Well) may Judah's daughters exult
Because of thy judgments!

VIII.

12 Walk around Zion, make a full circuit,
Reckon up its forts,
13 Mark well its castles,
View closely its towers;

IX.

Relate to the next generation
14 That Yahwè has brought deliverance;
Our God for ever and ever—
He himself will lead us.

Yes, certainly; this *is* a Messianic Psalm. No contemporary of Hezekiah would have seen in the retirement of the Assyrians the prelude to a kingdom of peace and of undisturbed happiness for Israel. Nor could a Psalmist of that early day have indulged in the daring hope of praising God's famous deeds "far as earth extends." *We*, on the other hand, even more than the worshippers of the God of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, may aspire to do so. On this, as well as on other grounds, Ps. xlviii. *can* be repeated in a Whit Sunday service.

PSALMS LIV, LVII

PSALMS LIV, LVII

THERE are two Psalms which are appointed in the Prayer Book for use respectively on Good Friday and on Easter Day which stand so close together and resemble each other so much that we may fitly consider them in combination. They are the 54th and the 57th. We ought, however, to take with them the 59th, which is a proper Psalm for Good Friday in the Latin and the Sarum Uses. In fact, the whole group of Psalms (liv.–lvii. and lix.) is so closely linked together by mutual resemblances that it is difficult to say why one Psalm should be selected for Good Friday or for Easter rather than another. All these Psalms are traditionally assigned to events in one or another troublous period in David's life, and we know that the early Church regarded his persecution as a type of that of Jesus Christ. Now the

doctrine that David is in the theological sense a type of our Lord is one of those heavy burdens on sensitive consciences which we of this generation are solemnly called upon to remove. David a type of Jesus Christ? As well might we say that Charlemagne was a perfect Christian. I do not, however, presume to blame those early Christians who held this opinion. It is truly pathetic to read the titles of some of the Psalms, and to notice the yearning of the Jewish scribes for a perfect man, for some one whom they could look up to and reverence as a saint. Good and devout men longed for a divine exemplar, but could only produce one by passing the life of David through the alembic of a powerful imagination. Then came the Christian Church, which was in many respects the disciple of the Jewish "Church." To admit the absolute perfection of David was beyond its power, but it readily assigned to the "man after God's heart" the rank of a typical personage, whose life, by a pre-established harmony, resembled somewhat that of Jesus Christ. And those Psalms which, not the Psalmists themselves, but the scribes who copied and edited them, assigned

to events in David's history, the earliest Jewish Christians, and the Gentile Christians after them, delighted to connect with the life and person of the "second David."

To explain these Psalms with reference to the sufferings of Jesus is certainly possible, if we confine our attention to isolated verses. When, for instance, we read (Ps. lv. 4, 5, A.V. and R.V.):

> My heart is sore pained within me,
> And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
> Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
> And horror hath overwhelmed me,

it is not unnatural to think with Bishop Wordsworth "of Christ's walk from Jerusalem to Gethsemane, on the night before the Passion, and of the agony there," and when we repeat the words (Ps. lv. 12, 13):

> For it was not an enemy that reproached me,
> Then I could have borne it . . .
> But it was thou, a man mine equal,
> My companion, and my familiar friend,*

* The Prayer Book Version facilitates the reference to Christ by giving "my companion," instead of "mine equal" (A.V. and R.V.), though in the next clause it neutralises this by the rendering "my guide" (so also A.V.). The Targum has, "And thou, Ahithophel, a man like unto me, the teacher who instructed me,

it is excusable if those who allow their interpretations to be dictated by their devotional sentiment think of Judas, whom his Master called "friend" (fellow, companion; Greek ἑταῖρε) when he betrayed Him with a kiss. It is less plausible, however, when the Church, according to the same Bishop, invites us to regard the words of Ps. lvii. 8 (A.V.), "I myself will awake early," as spoken by Christ through the mouth of David, because Jesus rose from the dead very early on the first day of the week. And still less plausible is it when the words of lix. 11 (A.V. and R.V.):

> Slay them not, lest my people forget:
> Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down,
> O Lord our shield,

are said to have been "uttered by Christ Himself speaking in David, and declaring, with divine judicial authority, what would be the doom of the Jews for their malice against Him." And when we look at all these passages, both those which are more and those which are less applicable to Jesus Christ, in

and made known wisdom unto me." Ahithophel is certainly a more plausible insertion than Judas. For "mine equal" the Septuagint has ἰσόψυχε (*cf.* Phil. ii. 20, where A.V. and R.V. have "like-minded").

the light of their context, we see that though there were elements in the character of the great and good speaker of these Psalms which remind us of the character of Jesus, there are others which are by no means in such perfect harmony with it as the traditional orthodox theory would require us to suppose.

And who was this great and good speaker, if he was not David? No hesitation need be felt in answering. We know even more certainly than if an ancient inscription told us, that it is the Jewish community in Palestine in post-exilic times—a composite body, which included not only the great mass of imperfect and sometimes inconsistent Israelites, but also that band of devoted servants of Yahwè which was the salt of the community, and of which the prophetic writer probably speaks in Isa. liii. and elsewhere. When we read those beautiful words (Ps. lv. 6, 7):

> And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove!
> Then would I fly away, and be at rest;
> Lo, then would I wander far off,
> I would lodge in the wilderness,

it is no individual, whether David or Jeremiah, who is the speaker, but the whole body

of persecuted but faithful Israelites of Palestine. And no better parallel can be desired than these words from the "Œdipus at Colonus" of Sophocles, in which the chorus personified is the speaker:

I know not, but my mind
Presageth me that soon
The spoiler shall give back
The maiden sorely tried, sorely by kinsman vexed.
To-day, to-day, some great thing Zeus shall do:
I prophesy the triumph of the right.
Oh that I were a dove, that I might wing the wind
With pinion swift and strong,
And from some airy pinnacle of cloud
Content mine eyes with gazing on the fray.*

The views which the present writer long ago propounded in this country have, with the independent advocacy of other scholars, gained more and more acceptance, and it will lead a student into no quagmire if he tells his congregation, and even his youthful scholars, that the speaker in these Psalms is no individual, but the Jewish "Church," which was conceived

* "Œd. Col.," 1076–1084 (Whitelaw), quoted in "Origin of the Psalter," 262; *cf.* Smend, in Stade's "Zeitschrift," 1888, p. 60.

of, as the Christian Church is conceived of in Eph. i. 22, 23, v. 25–27, as a living organism, united in all its parts, and as our native land is still habitually conceived of, especially in times of emotional excitement, by ourselves.

It is no subtle theory of the "higher criticism" which is here put forward; there is something far better than "higher criticism"—viz. critical history, for which it is a duty and a privilege to contend. Critical history is true; uncritical history is not true. The traditional explanation belongs to uncritical history; it is necessary therefore to replace it by another. The case of the 22nd Psalm is precisely analogous to that of the Psalms which we are considering. We have found the traditional explanation to be unsatisfactory there; it is no less unsatisfactory here. The view which is here propounded, on the other hand, is perfectly satisfactory. It gives the only natural explanation of the strange mixture of elements which we find in the Psalter.

But let me be more explicit. As I have said, there were two opposite tendencies among the Jews—one towards universal charity, the other towards bitterness and

wrath. The body of pious Jews, which formed the kernel of the Jewish community, was not less charitable than devout; its morality and religion were such as we find in the best of the Proverbs and in the passages on the Servant of Yahwè in the latter part of Isaiah. The author of the 22nd Psalm, which contains not a single bitter word, belonged to this class. But there were other Jews whose faith and hope contained more of the dross of human infirmity, probably because they were in closer contact with the unbelieving Jews and with the heathen oppressors. And it was their mind which found expression in the imprecations which too frequently mar our enjoyment of the Psalms.

Such imprecations occur at intervals almost throughout the group of Psalms now before us. Even the Good Friday Psalm contains these words (liv. 5) according to A.V.:

> He shall reward evil to mine enemies;
> Cut them off in thy truth;

and in the very Psalm which gave us the words for one of our sweetest anthems (lv. 6, 7), and the pathetic complaint, as we

are told, of the treason of Judas (lv. 12–14), we read, again following A.V. :

> Let death seize upon them,
> (And) let them go down quick into hell ;
> For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them (verse 15).

Still more awful are the words in lix. 11, quoted already, and supposed to have been "uttered by Christ Himself," but here textual criticism brings some relief to the Christian conscience, for we should almost certainly read thus :

> Terrify them, and they will seek thy name ;
> Hold them back, in thy faithfulness restrain them ;
> Bring them down, O Lord !

I admit that the Good Friday Psalm (liv.) is not so offensive to the Christian conscience as the neighbouring 55th Psalm. But we cannot isolate Ps. liv. from the other members of the same group of Psalms ; all the Psalms in that group must stand or fall together. To assert with Archbishop Alexander* (whom apart from some details in his theology all men delight to honour) that imprecations

* "The Witness of the Psalms to Christ," London, 1877, p. 46.

like these correspond to certain awful but real aspects of the character of Jesus Christ, is not justifiable. The dominant note of the character of Jesus was love; should there be anything in His life apparently inconsistent with this, must we not suppose that if we knew the circumstances accurately, the apparent inconsistency would disappear? To say that there are the same mysteries in the character of Jesus which theologians find in the character of God (see, however, Matt. v. 45) is fraught with danger to the empire of Jesus over the hearts of men, and even to Christian morality itself. It is high time for literary and historical criticism to apply more searching tests to evangelical records, for a Christ of this sort can be no example for all men, no leader for those who wish to throw off the relics of primitive barbarism.

It is not that we who, with the utmost respect, make this protest, are Christians of the old latitudinarian or the newer sentimental school. When Paley, the author of the "Evidences of Christianity," observes, in sketching the character of our Lord, "We perceive traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildness, patience, prudence," none

of us, I am sure, would accept this as adequate. Athanasius was quite right in including "courage" or "manliness" among the features of Christ's character. Nor is it any deduction from the relative perfection of that character to admit that, when strongly provoked by the spiritual tyranny of the Scribes and Pharisees, He used strong language respecting the incompetent religious experts as a class. Jesus Christ was a man of the sublimest, the most heroic courage. He knew that His life was at stake, and He did not shrink from passing prophetic judgment on those who reduced religion to the rank of an art. Criticism will not make the character of Jesus a whit less original than it really was, but it will remove many of those stumbling-blocks which the adherents of the older orthodoxy think themselves bound to defend. Jesus Christ was no sentimental philanthropist, but if there is anything in His reported words or works which is really akin to the extravagant language of some parts of the Psalter, we may confidently expect that historians will not endorse it. For thus far criticism has tended to make the heroes of the Bible less and not more mysterious, and

we cannot believe that the reverse will be the case when a more thorough criticism comes to be applied to the records of the highest life in history.

And is there nothing admirable in the 54th Psalm? Certainly, nothing so admirable that we can wish to repeat the Psalm on Good Friday. But the Psalmist's intense faith in the future of Israel, based upon purely religious grounds, *is* admirable. I shall return to this point presently. I have now to turn to the 57th Psalm.

A great Anglican authority states that this and the next two Psalms "have a prophetic reference to the sin of the Jews in persecuting the divine David, and to the miseries which overtook them for their sin, and to the woes which await all who resist Christ, and to the glory which He attained by suffering, and to which He invites all who believe and obey Him." Scholarship, however, which is bound to stand aloof from Church parties, pronounces emphatically against this view, and the words, "I myself will awake early," which this writer connects with the resurrection of Christ, *if correctly read*, are considered to refer to an ancient practice of

accompanying the morning sacrifice with a psalm. More probably, however, the words are corrupt, the text not having been preserved from the perils incident to all ancient writings. It will be noticed (see R.V., margin) that the Authorised and Revised Versions have not rendered literally; the translators felt that the poetical expression, "I will arouse the morn," was not suitable in such a plain context. The text must be corrupt. Parallelism itself shows this; the dawn cannot be parallel to harp and lyre; nor are the two Hebrew words rendered, "I will arouse the morn," enough to make a metrical line. The true reading undoubtedly is, "I will sing a new song."

Textual criticism also comes to our aid in the interpretation of Ps. lvii. 3, 4, a most obscure and unæsthetic passage in the common versions, and probably to be corrected thus:

From heaven he will reach forth and deliver me;
From the grasp of him that would crush me he will free me;
His loving-kindness and his faithfulness he will send forth,
[From death he will rescue] my soul.
In the midst of mine enemies I will be at rest,
Their jaw-teeth [my God will break].

"In the midst of mine enemies I will be at rest." Can there be any finer description of faith than this? The faithful community was in sore distress. The Persian rule in Judæa had become more oppressive than of old; there was now great friction between the Jews and their rulers. Worse than all, there were caitiff Jews who purchased riches and honour by concessions to heathenism, and scrupled not to oppress their own people.* Pious Israel is being pressed beyond endurance, and bitter, vindictive words force themselves from its lips!

Such love as these Jews felt for Israel is a more than earthly love. Its intensity arises from the fact that with them "people" and "church" were undistinguishable ideas. If such a melancholy event could be imagined as the political annihilation of England, we should still have a refuge in the Christian Church. Our love therefore is divided between England and the Christian brotherhood, and if our love for England is not merely selfish and earthly, this is due to its association with another and a purer love. But precious as these Psalms may be, both as

* "Jewish Religious Life," pp. 115, 123.

historical documents for the Persian period of Jewish history, and as expressions of one of the most interesting states of religious feeling, we cannot say that they are well adapted for ordinary use in the Christian congregation.

PSALM LXVIII

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It is probable that as soon as Whit Sunday became a Christian festival, the 68th Psalm was selected as appropriate for the occasion. The custom would naturally be based partly on an analogous Jewish practice, partly on an apostolic exposition of a passage in the Psalm. Certain verses which referred to the abundant food prepared for Yahwè for his people in Canaan marked out Ps. lxviii. as a psalm of the Harvest Festival (the Feast of Weeks). It was also used to celebrate the giving of the Law—that fine wheat which, as was believed, God gave His people at the season afterwards called Pentecost. St. Paul (if this apostle really wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians) connects the Psalm with a still greater fact of faith—the ascension of Christ, when He conferred spiritual gifts on the pioneers of the Gospel.

The old ecclesiastical interpretation of Ps. lxviii. is unflinchingly maintained by Bishop Wordsworth in his Commentary. It is repugnant to me even to seem to oppose a view which many call the Christian view, but it is necessary to do so. A complete examination of details need not be given; indeed, Bishop Wordsworth's exposition is of such a kind that reverence forbids me to criticise it, impossible as it is. But no harm can be done by smiling at the comment on verse 27, "By a divine intimation the Psalmist gives the first place among the four tribes which he mentions to the tribe of the Apostle of the Gentiles—St. Paul, who was the Benjamin among the apostolic patriarchs."

It may fairly be assumed that no thoughtful Christian would now accept the view given authoritatively by this admirer of patristic exegesis. Indeed, Bishop Wordsworth is himself, unconsciously perhaps, so much affected by modern criticism that he would hardly satisfy orthodox expositors of an earlier age. It is only going a step further to say that the interpretation of Ps. lxviii. which was inevitably accepted by the compilers of our Prayer Book, would not

satisfy any intelligent Anglican to-day. We must therefore ask in what sense any part of this Psalm can be retained as a canticle for Whit Sunday.

The Psalm is a grand poetical summary of the deliverances experienced by Israel in the past, which are regarded as typical of the future deliverance shortly to be expected. It is probable that some recent happy event has stimulated the hopes of pious Israel ; a foretaste seems to be enjoyed of the surpassing good fortune of the Messianic age. No Messiah, it is true, is referred to ; I use "Messianic" here in the larger sense to which students must by this time be accustomed. Literary reminiscences abound ; and as different scholars have ably shown, the earliest possible date is the close of the Persian Empire. The reference to Egypt, however, in verse 31 favours the view that Palestine is at this time under the rule of the Ptolemies. While Egypt was struggling for independence against the common foe (Artaxerxes Ochus), it is not likely that it would be selected as the representative of the nations which were to bring tribute to Jerusalem. The passage has been much

misunderstood, owing to corruptions of the text, and should probably be read thus:

> Menace thou, [O God,] the wild beasts of the reeds,
> The troop of strong ones, destroyers of peoples;
> Scatter thou the peoples which delight to begin strife.
> Let (vassals) come with ointments from Pathros,
> With store of silver let them draw near to God.

The Psalm falls into three parts. Part i. (verses 1–6) is introductory. The poet, under a kind of prophetic impulse, sees how by a sudden divine interposition the enemies of Israel, who are also the enemies of spiritual religion, are destroyed, while faithful Israelites, who are compared to orphans and widows, outcasts and prisoners, rejoice in this great act of justice. In fact, many of the Jews, even after the so-called exile was over, dwelt in foreign lands, while a large tract of Palestine was occupied by non-Israelites, and part of it by the Samaritan heretics. Those foreign lands, being so far from the Temple, seemed to the Jews dry and weary lands, without water. But a great change is at hand; how near, no one can tell. Part ii. (verses 7–18) is an historical retrospect. It describes the journey of the

Israelites through the desert, the conquest of Canaan, and the transference of the ark to Mount Zion. This last event is represented, by a distortion of history, as a great warlike achievement. It was the storming of the Jebusite citadel of Zion which was really a great achievement, after which David conceived the idea of placing Israel's most sacred object—the ark—in the newly conquered capital. This part of the Psalm is highly poetic, but the text unfortunately needs careful revision, and not least in the very portion which those who appointed Ps. lxviii. to be read on Whit Sunday no doubt thought specially important. A few moments must be devoted to summing up the main result of critical inquiry into the text of this passage.

The rendering of verse 18 (*a*, *b*) given in Eph. iv. 8 (A.V. and R.V.) runs thus:

> When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive,
> And gave gifts unto men.

The context of the passage shows, however, that what the writer means is, not divine gifts to men, but human tribute to God. The A.V. of Ps. lxviii. 18 therefore must be wrong. The R.V. changes "for men" into "among men."

This is no doubt a better rendering. But the next line of the stanza is so manifestly corrupt that it casts suspicion on the preceding part of the verse. Later on a new translation of the stanza to which the passage belongs will be offered. But so much at least must already be clear to the most conservative reader that no Christian application of the passage is possible.

Part iii. (verses 19–35) is not much easier than Part ii. It is, however, of special interest because it embodies the hopes and aspirations of the Jewish community at the time when this Psalm was written, *i.e.* not improbably the time when the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ contended for the possession of Palestine. How far do these hopes and aspirations accord with those of Christians? Germs at least of some of our Christian ideas may naturally be expected.

We must not begin by looking too closely into details. People who belong to very different stages of moral and intellectual and social development will not give the same imaginative expression to the hope which they may nevertheless hold in common. It is our fortune to live more than two thousand

years after this Psalm was written, and our training, both as individuals and as a nation, has been very different from that of the Psalmist and his countrymen. But an increasing number of us do share with the Psalmist a passionate desire for the general uplifting of moral and social standards, and for the universal recognition of one Supreme God, the God of righteousness and love. The details of Part iii., it is true, are not in all respects such as we can approve. We reject absolutely the thought of taking vengeance on the foes of the great religion which we profess. We cannot sing,

> Surely, God will shatter the head of the enemy,
> Yea, the skull of the wicked who stalks (unchecked) in his sins.

We desire that all mankind should worship the same moral God that we do, but we decline to effect this by slaying those who attack or oppose our religion, or by forcing all nations to make an external profession of allegiance to the true God. The names of Canning and Gordon are dear to us, and we will not swerve from their principles. We sympathise therefore with the writer of

Isa. xlii. 1–4 much more completely than with the author of Ps. lxviii.

Our conclusion must be that Ps. lxviii. needs revision, if it is to be used in Christian worship. We ought not to reject it altogether, because parts of it express a faith in the true God, and in His ultimate recognition as such by all mankind, and also a gratitude to Him for His providential direction of history, with which we are in hearty accordance. But other verses ought most certainly to be omitted, and for clearness sake I will bring together in a new translation the passages which, as it seems to me, we may still thankfully use. Our Church translation will no doubt be retained, but to show the true spirit of the Psalm I think it best to use the version which, as I venture to think, probably gives the nearest approximation to the writer's meaning :

4 Sing unto Yahwè, chant psalms to his name,
Praise him who rides upon the clouds,
Glorify Yahwè, exult before him.

5 A father of orphans, an advocate of widows
Is God in his holy habitation ;
6 God brings home the outcasts,

Releases prisoners from their bonds,
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

7 O Yahwè! when thou wentest forth before thy people,
When thou marchedst from the highlands of Edom,
8 The earth quaked, the heavens swayed to and fro,
[The clouds also dropped water,]
At the presence of Yahwè, Israel's God.

9 With the treasures of heaven above
Thou, O God, didst bless thine inheritance,
And all that it contained thou madest ready.
10 With thy corn they were satisfied therein,
In thy goodness thou didst prepare for the people.

15 Ye primæval mountains, ye fertile mountains,
Ye mountains of Lebanon, ye fertile mountains,
16 Why skip ye (with fear), ye Lebanon mountains?
(This is) the mount which God desires to dwell in,
And here God will abide for evermore.

17 The chariots of God are (counted by) myriads;
With the clans of Israel he came from Sinai.
18 Thou hast gone up to the height to abide in the land,
Thou hast led captive our captors, hast received tribute,
Yea, even the rebellious have brought gifts.

[19] Blessed be Yahwè, Israel's God,
[20] The God (who is) our succour has delivered us;
It is he who gives might to his people.

[24] I will recount thy wonders, O Yahwè,
I will praise thee, O my king, in the sanctuary.

[32] O ye kingdoms of the earth, sing ye unto God,
[Praise Yahwè!] chant psalms unto Yahwè!
[33] Praise him who rides on the heights of the skies,
[Glorify Yahwè, exult before him].
When he utters his voice, lo, the earth (itself) rocks.

[35] It is he who gives might to his people,
Blessed be God, the Redeemer of Israel!

Surely this gives a beautiful picture of God, the protector of the weak against their oppressors, the controller and director of the affairs of the world, the God who shall one day be acknowledged, not only by one or two nations, but by all the peoples. It is this universalistic aspiration which gives, perhaps, its chief value to the Psalm. The Psalmist who represents Israel is at least potentially a missionary. He summons all peoples to glorify God for His (anticipated) deliverance of Israel, and this surely implies the wish to make the deliverance intelligible

to all peoples. Why has Israel been redeemed out of so many troubles? and why does Israel believe that it will yet be redeemed out of the oppression (we may call it such, even though the new rule was an improvement on the old) of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ? Because in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth are to be blessed. The old "particularism" of the Jews is beginning to fade, or at least to be rendered more innocent. It is coming to be felt that favouritism is inconsistent with the high attributes of the true God. In Christian teaching of course this idea is fundamental, and in so far as the 68th Psalm expresses a faith in divine righteousness, and a conviction that the superiority of one nation is only permitted for the good of more backward peoples, it is a possession of the Christian Church.*

* For an instructive exposition of Ps. lxviii., according to the received text, see Driver's "Sermons on Old Testament Subjects," and *cf.* the present writer's "Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism," pp. 323-341.

PSALM LXXXV

PSALM LXXXV

AN earnest and devout writer on the Psalms, who cannot be accused of an undue patristic bias, writes thus on the 85th Psalm: "An expression of Israelitish gratitude to God after the return from Babylon. It utters thanks for the great benefit already received, and it prays for yet larger bounty, with a confidence toned by reverent fear, but accompanied by a bright expectation of the eternal joy secured by the Messiah." The same writer adds that it "has been chosen as one of the proper Psalms for Christmas Day, which is a festival of joy, anticipating a more complete bliss in the future day of salvation."*

This is a very interesting and rather uncommon view of the Psalm. The mercies

* Canon D. D. Stewart, "A Summary of the Psalms" (1898), p. 71.

already granted in and through Christ are great, but they do not come up to the boundless cravings of the redeemed nature of man. Glory does not yet "*dwell* in our land," nor does the "land" which we till under the great Husbandman as yet "give her" full "increase." We look forward, therefore, from the nativity of Christ in the past to the future birthday of earth and heaven when Christ shall appear as unexpectedly as of old at Bethlehem, but with the glory which was then veiled from human view.

The ordinary view, however, of devout and scholarly men is probably near to that which I will now quote from one of our most useful Commentaries. The Psalm "is full of Messianic hopes. The Incarnation is the true answer to the prayer of Israel: and in Christ almost every word of the second part finds its fulfilment. The message of peace, the nearness of salvation, &c.—these blessings were imparted in Christ in a fulness and a reality far transcending anything that the Psalmist could have anticipated." *

The respective points of view of these two

* Canon Kirkpatrick, "The Psalms, Books II., III." (1895), p. 511.

writers are equally Christian, but evidently not identical. Canon Kirkpatrick reads verses 8–13 as a poetic prophecy of the blessings which we actually enjoy in and through Jesus Christ. Verses 1–7 have an interest as a record of the feelings of devout Jews in "the early days of the return from Babylon," and as an introduction to the restatement in verses 8–13 of "the prophetic promises of a glorious Messianic future," which were more completely fulfilled in Christ than "the Psalmist could have anticipated." Canon Stewart, however, regards both parts of the Psalm as *equally* Christian. As he reads those words of the Prayer Book version,

> "Lord, thou art become gracious unto thy land:
> Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob,"

he thinks of the blessing of forgiveness of sins and "all other benefits of Christ's Passion," and without underestimating the present salvation, has the boldness—the holy boldness—to ask for more:

> "Wilt thou not turn again, and quicken us,
> That thy people may rejoice in thee?"

Then, in the spirit of the Prayer Book, which breaks up verse 7 into two versicles in Morning and Evening Prayer, he prays,

> "Show us thy mercy, O Lord,
> And grant us thy salvation,"

a prayer which seems to him to be in perfect harmony with verse 9,

> "His salvation is nigh them that fear him,
> That glory may dwell in our land,"

and so he is able to justify the future tenses in verses 11–13, "Truth shall spring," "The Lord shall give," "Righteousness shall go."

Both these writers have a connected view of the meaning of the Psalm. Probably, however, the compilers of our Prayer Book had no such view in their minds. They simply thought of the second part of verse 9, and of verses 10 and 11. The words "that glory may dwell in our land," where the Septuagint gives for "dwell" a word which might be rendered "tabernacle,"* they understood to refer to the "tabernacling" of the divine glory in the human nature of

* *κατασκηνῶσαι*. *Cf.* John i. 14, where the Revised Version gives, as a marginal note on "dwell," "Greek, tabernacled."

Jesus Christ. The springing of truth out of the ground they considered, with St. Jerome, to be a figurative expression for the same mystery of faith, and the combination of righteousness and truth to point to the fact that "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John i. 9); they may even, with St. Bernard, have supposed a conflict between the four virtues, truth and justice, peace and mercy. I take it for granted, however, that this mechanical sort of exegesis is no longer generally accepted, and if so, we have to see if there is any other way of justifying the use of Ps. lxxxv. on Christmas Day, and to consider the two modern Christian interpretations which lie before us.

One may perhaps without offence remark that the first of the two interpretations is theologically much the deeper. A Messianic psalm must, for the Christian as well as for the Jew, be both retrospective and prospective. A Jew who believed in prophecy, and who was in the least capable of comparing the Israel of the distant past with the Israel of the present, was conscious that Messianic blessings had in some degree been granted; Psalm after Psalm rises to the lips in proof

that this was the case. A Christian too, who believes the Gospel record, and who has both witnessed and experienced the benefits obtained through Christ, knows that the Messianic day dawned long ago. But both Jew and Christian look forward to a fuller realisation of the prophetic hopes which ushered in the Messianic age.

But, it may be said, the philological spirit puts a certain restraint on our soaring theology. We could not adopt verses 4–7 as Christian unless we could put ourselves back, not only imaginatively but really, in the position of the Jews who first uttered this passage. The Jews belonged to a falling people; the ambition of their aspirations was the result of a reaction from the depth of their misery. Ours is an entirely different case. Christ's religion ensures us against such a catastrophe as that of the Babylonian captivity: at any rate, it has thus far apparently preserved us from it. Certainly verses 4–7 cannot be adopted by Christians. They imply a depth of misery to which a Christian nation could not sink, unless, indeed, it were laid prostrate by a nation, superior to it in physical power, but inferior in moral and spiritual culture.

They also imply a want of trust in the love of God, of which a Christianised people could not possibly become guilty.

But the essential feature of verses 1–7 (taking Ps. lxxxv. as it now stands) is not the weakness of the faith of the speaker, but his feeling that the lofty promises of the Book of Israel's Restoration (Isa. xl.–lv.) had not been as yet at all adequately fulfilled, and verses 8–13, if they stand in any real relation to verses 1–7, show that the speaker had a firm confidence that a far greater fulfilment was on its way. I think therefore that, taking this Psalm as it now stands both in the Bible and in the Prayer Book versions, we cannot do otherwise than adopt the interpretation offered by Canon Stewart in preference to that represented by Canon Kirkpatrick. The greatly superior scholarship of the latter cannot outweigh his inferiority in theological insight. The intuitions of a weak scholar may sometimes be more valuable than the most correct philological judgments of a professor.

Of course, when we come to look at isolated expressions, it is open to us to give them any application which grammar and

good taste permit. When we read that fine rhythmical passage,

> Mercy and peace are met together,
> Righteousness and peace have kissed each other,

it is difficult not to adopt it as a symbol for the work of Jesus. Milton evidently so adopted it, and his words are almost as familiar to educated Christians as those of the Psalmist:

> Yea, truth and justice then
> Will down return to men,
> Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
> Mercy will sit between,
> Throned in celestial sheen,
> With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
> And heaven, as at some festival,
> Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.*

And if we extend the range of our interest to the Septuagint and (therefore) to the Vulgate, which read, in verse 8, "I will hearken what the Lord God will say *in me*," it is natural to apply this to a certain high experience of which the Psalmists were fully conscious, but which Christians are wont to

* "Ode on the Nativity." The allusion to Ps. xxiv. 7 cannot fail to strike the reader.

trace to the coming of Jesus—viz. the inward communing of the soul with the Divine Spirit. St. Jerome comments: "The prayer which I prayed is not in vain: I am conscious of God speaking in me; I understand that, when I asked, an answer of peace was given to me." And Thomas à Kempis has those fine passages in the first two chapters of Book iii. of the "Imitation":

> "I will hearken what the Lord God will say in me.
> Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking in herself,
> And hears words from his consolatory mouth."

> "Let not Moses speak to me, nor any of the prophets:
> Do thou rather speak, O Lord God, inspirer and illuminator of the ears of the prophets."

Still this dwelling on a single word is but the same kind of playful exegesis which we sometimes practise on our secular Bible—Shakespeare: it should not be our rule to take such liberties with the text of the Psalms. And the fact that readers of the Psalms have not been satisfied without such unchartered licence should make those of us who are scholars, and reverence critical truth,

dig deeper down, till we reach the very roots of the text.

What does the Psalm really mean? Two opposite views are taken of this. According to Wellhausen, the situation presupposed is a prosperous one. "The present state of affairs calls for nothing but thanksgiving." According to Kirkpatrick, "the present condition of Israel seems to show that God's anger still rests upon it." Wellhausen bases his view on verses 1–3 and 9–13; Kirkpatrick on verses 4–7. As the text stands both views are equally legitimate, and yet commonsense says that they are mutually exclusive. The case is not like that of Ps. cxxvi. There, too, very different pictures are given of Israel's state. But there it is distinctly stated that one picture relates to the past; the other to the present.

When Yahwè turned the captivity of Zion,
It was as though we dreamed!
Then our mouths were filled with laughter,
And our tongues with shouts of joy;
Then was it said among the heathen:
A great thing has Yahwè done for them.
A great thing (indeed) had Yahwè done for us!
We were joyful.*

* Wellhausen and Furness.

PSALM LXXXV

When the Babylonian yoke was broken Israel rejoiced; words like "Thou art become gracious to thy land, thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob" (lxxxv. 1), rose naturally to its lips. So the Psalmist tells us; no violence is done to the text in interpreting Ps. cxxvi. 1–5 of a period in the past. And when the Psalmist continues, "Turn thou, O Yahwè, our captivity . . . like channels in the dry land," * we cannot be accused of arbitrariness in referring his words to "a time of serious disaster, probably [or, possibly] the persecution by the Syrians" (B.C. 168).† But in Psalm lxxxv. the case is quite different. Wellhausen feels himself obliged to prefix to verse 4 the explanatory gloss, "(In the bygone days of distress we said)," and says in his note, "The prayer of verses 4–7 can belong only to bygone days before the happy change of verse 1 occurred. The speaker turns back to the affliction that is past, in order to make the sense of present deliverance more real and deep." This makes a clear sense. But is it not very arbitrary to insert that explanatory gloss? Kirkpatrick, on the other hand, avoids taking liberties

* Same translation. † Wellhausen.

with the text. He retains the renderings, "Thou hast been [become] favourable," "Thou hast brought [turned] back" (verse 1). But how can we say in the same Psalm, "Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land," and "Turn us, O God of our salvation" (verse 4)? Kirkpatrick comments on verses 4–7, "Yet in spite of forgiveness and restoration, much is still lacking. Oh that God would wholly withdraw His wrath, and gladden His people with a full salvation!" But is this at all natural? Ought we not to insert an explanatory gloss, "Yet, though thou hast forgiven us, thy wrath is so hot against us that we cry in the bitterness of our soul"? If we shrink from this, doubtless arbitrary, course, must we not render with Dr. John de Witt, "Thou, O Jehovah, didst favour thy land . . . didst pardon . . . didst forgive . . . didst withdraw," &c.? And yet this course, too, must be called arbitrary, for no one would so render the perfects without some guide in the context, such as "In bygone days," so that Dr. de Witt, too, virtually thrusts a gloss into the text.

There is yet another verse which causes

great difficulty. It is the eighth, which Wellhausen and Furness render thus:

> Fain would I hear what God (?) Yahwè speaks;
> For he will speak welfare for his people and his pious ones,
> Lest, at last, they sink into folly.

The difficulty is threefold.

(1) The text of the closing line is uncertain (see Septuagint); what the Hebrew means, it is difficult to say. (2) If Wellhausen is right in saying that "verses 9–13 return to the point of view in verses 1–3," verse 8 seems to be a needless interruption. (3) The calm tone of verse 8 contrasts strongly with the passionate emotion of the preceding verses.

Nothing but a strict inquiry into the soundness of the text can be expected to bring a remedy. The obscurities, if I mistake not, may be removed partly by correcting the text, partly by recognising the composite character of the Psalm. Verses 8–11 and 13 are very probably a later appendix, attached by the authorities to the short Psalm of supplication contained in verses 1–7. For the same reason that the quotation from

Isa. lxiii. 12, in Luke iv. 18, 19, closes with the words, "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord," the editor of the short Psalm in lxxxv. 1–8 sought to modify its melancholy tone by the addition of some delightful Messianic promises. The corrections of the text cannot be explained here without undue repetition from a commentary now in preparation. The whole Psalm stands thus, when the corrections of the text have been utilised in the translation :

I.

[1] Oh that thou wouldest become gracious to
thy land,
Wouldest restore Jacob to life,
[2] Wouldest take away the guilt of thy people,
Wouldest cancel all their sin,
[3] Wouldest withdraw all thy fury,
Wouldest restrain thy hot anger!

II.

[4] Restore (life to) us, O God our deliverer,
And turn aside thine indignation at us.
[5] Wilt thou be perpetually angry with us?
Wilt thou prolong thy wrath for all time?
[6] Wilt thou not now restore us to life,
That thy people may rejoice in thee?

PSALM LXXXV

III.

[7] Make us, O Yahwè, to enjoy thy loving-kindness,
And do thou grant us thy deliverance.
(The original close of this stanza is lost.)

Appendix.

[8] I will hearken to that which God promises;
Truly, he promises welfare to his loyal ones.
[9] Near is his deliverance to those who revere him.
That his glory may abide in our land.

IV.

[10] Loving-kindness and faithfulness meet;
Righteousness and welfare join together;
[11] Faithfulness springs out of the earth,
And loving-kindness looks down from heaven.*
[13] Righteousness will walk before him,
And welfare (will follow) in his footsteps.

The closing verses are a divine oracle, and may well be used on Christmas Day, for never will the highest ideals of the Jewish and Christian heart be realised till the "day of the Lord" shall come. Christian thoughts are both retrospective and prospective; we

* A scribe inserted the following, "Yahwè also will give his bounty, and our land will yield its increase."

cannot celebrate the initial fulfilment of Messianic prophecies without looking forward to a more complete fulfilment, "the day and the hour of which no one knoweth."

PSALM CX

PSALM CX

If the present writer had consulted his own inclination, he would not have included this Psalm among those treated in the present volume, partly because it is so obscure, and partly because it has furnished the material for a controversy in which, except for the sympathy which he feels with both the parties engaged in it, he cannot profess to take a strong interest. It is true that the 110th Psalm was appointed by the compilers of our Prayer Book to be said or sung on Christmas Day, and their ground doubtless was the conviction that the Lord Jesus revealed to the world the true interpretation of this Psalm—viz., that it declares David's faith in the divine nature of the Messiah. This conviction, however, it is not possible, from an historical point of view, to hold. It is irreconcilable with all that is most

certainly known of the character and inner life of the Lord Jesus, nor can it justly claim the support of a well-known gospel narrative (Mark xii. 35–37, Matt. xxii. 41–46, Luke xx. 41–44). Let us refer to this narrative in the form in which it is given in the R.V. of Mark's Gospel.

"Now Jesus answered and said, as he taught in the temple, How say the Scribes that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit (= by the spirit of prophecy), the Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?"

It may be remarked upon this that it is obviously not intended as a final exposition of the meaning of the words of the Psalm, nor even as an historical assertion of the Davidic authorship of the Psalm, for this reason—that the reference to the Psalm is only made for controversial purposes, and that in a controversy it has always been usual to adopt the position of your adversary in so far as you find it convenient to do so. That Jesus Christ was literally descended from

David is no doubt a common belief, but it is more than any strict historian can venture positively to assert. One thing, however, is historically quite certain—viz., that from a moral point of view He was not a son of David, and it is just that moral affinity to David which a large section of the people supported by the Scribes and Pharisees ascribed to the Messiah. We, in opposition to the Scribes, assert, that the Christ could not be morally a son of David, because, though David may have been above the average of his contemporaries, he was morally far below the standard set up in the heart by God Himself, and not entirely unrecognised by the best Jews in our Lord's time.

That this is not too bold a statement must be clear from the Books of Samuel. The king who is there described under the name of David is not the David whom we perhaps suppose that we know from the 51st Psalm, but one whose ideal of national greatness closely resembles that of the Assyrian kings. The Lord Jesus, on the other hand, had the same ideal for His people and Himself which is expressed in Isa. xlii. 1–4, and put no value on any sonship which did not supply

a worthy model for imitation. These are the startling words which, according to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus addressed to His contemporaries: "If ye were the children of Abraham, ye would do the works of Abraham. Ye are of your father the devil" (John viii. 39, 44). After this, can we believe that the Lord Jesus attached the slightest importance to being the descendant of David? No; it is not possible. As long as He could, He seems to have avoided or quietly declined the title of Messiah, because it might have suggested a wrong conception of His ideal, and when He asked the Jews, "How say the scribes that the Christ is the son of David?" we must suppose Him to have meant something like this, "The scribes are wrong in laying the least stress on any prophecies which refer to the Messiah as the son of David,* because no representative of Yahwè is worthy of the title who is not, in the most important respects, diametrically opposed to David."

It is therefore a huge mistake to look to

* Whether at an earlier part of the post-exilic period of Jewish history it was a universally recognised fact that the Messiah was to be a literal "son of David" is open to much doubt. See Jewish Religious Life," p. 96.

this passage of the Synoptic Gospel narrative for any authoritative exposition of the meaning of the 110th Psalm. Whether Jesus Himself ascribed it to David is a matter of small moment. Had He been omniscient in geology and history, He would not have been "like unto us in all things, sin only except," nor could He have fulfilled the purposes of His divine mission. Possibly He may have accepted the current doctrine of the Jewish schools. But it is by no means inconceivable that He set this decision aside. It was far too unimportant a point (considering what a great spiritual work He was doing) for Him to touch upon in public. But His spiritual tact was so great that we can quite imagine that He refused in His own mind to ascribe Ps. cx to the same author as Psalms like the 16th, the 22nd, and the 69th. We cannot dogmatise on this point, but we are assured on the best authority that He was on other subjects a very keen critic of the traditional Jewish exegesis.* But so much at any rate ought to be clear, that the compilers of our Prayer Book were in error in so far as they based

* *Cf.* "Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism," p. 393.

their appointment of Ps. cx. as a proper Psalm for Christmas Day on the language which Jesus is reported to have used to the Scribes and Pharisees.

Nor can such an appointment justly be based on the quotation of Ps. cx. 1 in Heb. i. 13 (*cf.* verse 3; x. 12, 13). The compilers of our Prayer Book no doubt thought that the exposition in the Epistle to the Hebrews was decisive, and that the Feast of the Nativity was a suitable occasion to commemorate the raising of Jesus to the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Resurrection or Ascension festival might no doubt have seemed a still more appropriate occasion for using the Psalm which contains the *Sheb limīnī* ("Sit thou at my right hand"). But in verse 3* the Septuagint has, according to the common rendering, "From the womb before the morning-star I begot thee." "From the womb" is thus explained by Theodoret, "signifying that he is of the same substance (with the Father)." "Before the morning-star"; that is, "before the (succession of)

* Prayer Book version, "The dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning." Authorised and Revised Version, "(in the beauties of holiness) from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

times, and before the worlds." Thus the mystery of the eternal generation of the Son is suggested in this prophetic passage, a mystery which is presupposed in the doctrine of the Incarnation, as explained by the profound Greek theologians, working on the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel. We can now understand why the 110th Psalm was appointed for use on Christmas Day.

It was no doubt a corroboration, if not of the choice of this particular day, yet at least of the special application of Ps. cx. in all its parts to Jesus Christ that in Heb. vii. 17 the 4th verse of this Psalm is explained of the high priestly office of Christ. No fair historical student would dream of disparaging the arguments of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who may be fitly called the first real Christian theologian. But certainly we cannot venture to claim finality for the details of this great writer's exegesis. The allegorising exegesis, which made Melchizedek a type of Jesus Christ, had its day, but cannot be revived with any hope of success. It will not bear to be made part of our religious creed.

There is, however, yet one question to

which the reader may expect an answer, "Had the Lord any other object in His controversy with the Scribes besides that of showing the inadequacy of the title 'Son of David' for the true Messiah? Did He desire to lead those who heard Him to the belief that the Messiah was necessarily in a special sense divine?" This question I will now seek to answer, so far as it can be answered. All that the narrative distinctly proves is that Jesus wished to show the inadequacy of "Son of David" as a Messianic title. But the narrative of the examination of Jesus before the high priests leads to the conjecture that He may really have designed to suggest a higher title for the Messiah—viz., "Son of God." As the supreme crisis in His life drew near, the Lord's boldness of speech seems to have increased. He was now not unwilling to be called Messiah, but, if so, He would claim the full dignity of the Messiah. The Messiah was no mere Son of David; and the grandest of the current Messianic prophecies—that in Dan. vii. 13—which He quotes in the course of His examination, does not refer to the Davidic origin of the Messiah at all. It may be conjectured that

the Scribes, in our Lord's time, neglected the Book of Daniel. They seem to have preferred to take their Messianic doctrine from other passages of Scripture in which the Messiah was not so intensely supernatural a form as He appeared in the Book of Daniel. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, disregards those other Messianic prophecies, and concentrates His attention on this supreme prophecy. He may or may not have been a Son of David; the question is not one of vital importance. But He was certainly conscious of a filial relation to God such as no other Israelite of His time presumed to claim.

From this point of view it might seem reasonable to substitute for the 110th Psalm as a Christmas canticle the sublime words of Dan. vii. 13, 14 (R.V.):

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Yes; if an Old Testament canticle on the subject of the Incarnation must be had, this would, perhaps, be the best course to adopt. Two objections, however, must not be withheld: (1) that the context of Dan. vii. 13, 14 implies the use of violent means to establish the divine kingdom, and (2) that critical exegesis shows that the "Son of Man" spoken of is not any individual, but a personification (the word is too weak, but is convenient) of the Jewish people, for there is no reference elsewhere in Daniel to the Messiah, and in the explanation of the vision (verse 27) we read that "the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his (its) kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him (it)." Whether Jesus considered this passage to apply to Himself, no one can possibly know. He does not quote it, and even if He had quoted it, it would have been simply for a controversial purpose, and the remarks already made on His use of Ps. cx. 1 will be applicable here. And so I am driven to ask my fellow Christians, Need there be—

can there be—an Old Testament canticle of the Incarnation at all?

For the real truth of the Person of Christ is so beautiful, so extraordinary, that no one could possibly have imagined it before the gracious reality appeared. And the nearest approach to an anticipation of the truth is to be found, not in the Psalms, but in the song-like passages on the Servant of Yahwè in the second part of Isaiah. How violently the spirit of these passages contrasts with the spirit of Ps. cx. hardly need be pointed out. There is indeed only one consideration which can perhaps reconcile us to the provisional use of Ps. cx. on Christmas Day, and it is this: the intense hatred of the enemies of Israel and its religion expressed in this Psalm is the correlative of an equally intense hatred of evil. Judaism, like Zoroastrianism, originated as a protest, not only against idolatry and polytheism, but against the moral evil with which idolatry and polytheism were connected. It may be allowable to use the fervent though very imperfect words of Hebrew Psalmists to stir ourselves up to a greater moral energy, at least until our own religious poets have done more to

render such use of the Psalms superfluous. For surely it *is* the Lord at our right hand who fights for us and with us against the powers of evil, in ourselves and in the world. We are not left to ourselves; God is our "sun and shield." Our aim indeed is in some respects different from that of the Psalmist. We do not wish to sit on thrones, ruling nations with an iron sceptre; our ambition is, not to destroy evil men, but to overcome evil with good. And our Messiah is not one who can "strike through kings in the day of his wrath," but one "for whose instruction the far countries wait" (Isa. xlii. 4).

There is one more reason for not permanently retaining Ps. cx. in the list of proper Psalms, or indeed in the Anglican Psalter at all, but I do not like to press it on this occasion too earnestly. It is the obscurity of the Psalm, which is universally admitted by scholars, and, as I venture to think, arises from the state of the Hebrew text, which is corrupt, though not quite beyond hope of cure. As the text now stands, it is extremely difficult not to explain the Psalm of one of the Maccabæan brothers; it would be most

natural to think of Simon (B.C. 142–135), who did not, of course, claim the title of king, but lacked nothing of the dignity but the name, though something may no doubt be said in favour of John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135–105), who may be said to have consolidated a second Israelitish empire. The words "after the order of Melchizedek" are not at all unsuitable for one of the Maccabæan princes. One of the most favoured titles of the God of Israel in the later period is the same which occurs in the solemn speeches of Melchizedek and Abraham in Gen. xiv. 19, 22. "What more natural than to take this righteous and religious personage as the type of another priest-king of Salem, whose conception of God was expressed in the same venerable phrase?"* Certainly, if the text of Ps. cx. 4 is correct, the personage referred to is not the Messiah-Priest, a combination of offices which is not within the horizon of any of the Old Testament writers, but either Simon or some other Asmonæan prince. Whatever objections may be raised from the history of

* "Origin of the Psalter," 27 (in the course of a very full exposition of the Maccabæan hypothesis, and criticism of rival views).

the Canon (as yet by no means a perfectly clear subject) must give way before the very distinct phrase, "after the order of Melchizedek."

That the editor from whom the Psalm in its present form proceeds meant this appears to me highly probable. Certainly I have no inclination to go back to my own original view * that the Psalm belongs to the age of Zerubbabel, and refers to the Messiah regarded as priest and king in one † (*cf.* Zech. vi. 9–13). But I am now strongly of opinion that here, as in other passages, the words which appear to point to contemporary historical references are due to corruption of the text. At a very early period Ps. cx. became both mutilated and corrupt. Mutilated, because no one can believe that verse 7 was always the closing verse. Corrupt, because the phraseology of the Psalm, as it now stands, is not at all such as was customary with the Psalmists. Applying the same methods which have, as one may perhaps venture to say, already led to results of some critical interest, I have arrived at the

* See "Prophecies of Isaiah," ii. 200.

† Against this view, see "Origin of the Psalter," pp. 21, 22.

following reading of verses 3 and 4, which is taken from a forthcoming critical work on the Psalter to which I have more than once referred :

> Thy people volunteer when thou wouldest fight
> On the holy mountains ;
> I have anointed thee as their marshal,
> I have begotten thee as their king.
>
> Yahwè swears [by his holiness],
> And will not repent ;
> I establish thee for ever
> Because of my covenant of loving-kindness.*

There is now no reason for hesitating to group Ps. cx. with Ps. xlv. as a Psalm of the Messiah, regarded as a stern and successful warrior. By historical sympathy we may learn to appreciate both ; but we can hardly sing them. Both Psalms belong to a time when great bitterness of feeling prevailed towards foreign nations on account of the oppression which the Jews in Judæa were suffering, and we do not wish to encourage ourselves in the habit of using violent language towards our enemies, even if the right be on our side.

* *Cf.* the corrected reading given above (p. 152) of Ps. xlv. 4*a* (5*a*). Both psalms (like Ps. lxxxix.) presuppose the prophecy ascribed to Nathan in 2 Sam. vii.

PSALM CXVIII

PSALM CXVIII

THE 118th Psalm was a battle-song of the Huguenots; it could hardly have become this if the Huguenots had been wont to sing it, as Anglican Churchmen sing it, on Easter Day. And yet there are some passages of the Psalm which give some colour to the Huguenot theory that the Psalm is a war-song. I quote them from the Prayer Book version, but the Authorised Bible Version is in all essentials identical with this:

7 The Lord taketh my part with them that help me:
Therefore shall I see my desire upon mine enemies.
10 All nations compassed me round about:
But in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them.
11 They kept me in on every side, they kept me in, I say, on every side:
But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.
12 They came about me like bees,
And are extinct even as the fire among the thorns:
For in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

On the other hand, there are also verses which describe a character such as Christians may rightly aim at, and express thoughts not inappropriate for the festival of Easter. Take these passages :

6 The Lord is on my side: I will not fear
What man doeth unto me.
17 I shall not die, but live :
And declare the works of the Lord.
18 The Lord hath chastened and corrected me :
But he hath not given me over unto death.
22 The same stone which the builders refused :
Is become the head-stone in the corner.

The spirit of trust, so simply and beautifully expressed in verse 6, is not that of an armed warrior, even if he be a truly religious-minded warrior, and trust in the blessing of God upon a righteous cause *more* than in his own arm. We must take this verse in connection with passages like xxxiii. 16, 20 (new translation) :

16 A king is not victorious through a great army,
A warrior does not win deliverance by much strength.
Our soul waits for Yahwè,
He (alone) is our help and our shield.

The Psalm cannot be a work of the Macca-

bæan age.* Those for whom the writer speaks have no "two-edged sword in their hands, to be avenged of the heathen, and to rebuke [punish] the people" (cxlvi. 6, 7, Prayer Book); they are "poor and afflicted" ones, who are meek in spirit, "take refuge" in Yahwè (verses 8, 9), and believe in the efficacy of prayer. They may "look with triumph on their enemies" (verse 7*b*), whom God, not man, has overthrown, but they would rather that those enemies had not brought ruin upon themselves, for their high mission is to "declare the works of Yahwè" (verse 17), which consist, not only in destroying, but in reviving; not only in pulling down, but in building up; and if "*all nations*" had been "destroyed," where would be the hearers of their eloquent discourse? Nor do they concentrate their thoughts on the future glory of Israel; it is enough for them that they are still in the land of the living, for "while they live" they desire no other occupation than "singing

A strict revision of the Hebrew text is unfavourable to a Maccabæan reference. The psalm appears to be of the pre-Maccabæan Greek period. The opposite view, however, is plausible enough, upon conservative views of textual criticism; see further the chapter on Pss. cxiii.–cxviii. in "Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism" by the present writer, pp. 375–391.

praises unto their God" (cxlvi. 1, Prayer Book). "I shall see my desire [look with triumph] upon mine enemies," is no doubt an ambiguous expression, but the phrase need not mean more than "I shall, with a grateful heart, watch my enemies taking flight, or stretched (senseless, but not lifeless) upon the ground." For there is reason to think that in one of the most startling imprecatory Psalms (lix.), in which the same phrase ("... see my desire upon mine enemies") occurs, Christian worshippers have been for centuries saying and singing words which do very great injustice to the Psalmist, and which have solely arisen from corruption of the Hebrew text. I venture to quote a well-considered translation of a corrected text of the passage referred to, because it leaves it open to us to interpret Ps. cxviii. 7 in a somewhat more charitable sense than is usual:

[11] O God, let thy loving-kindness come to meet me;
O Yahwè, do thou delight mine eyes with (the fall of) my foes.
[12] Terrify them, and they will seek thy name;
Hold them back, in thy faithfulness restrain them,
Bring down their pride, O Lord!
[13] Let the sin of their lips bring them to ruin,

Let the traitors be caught in their own net,
Let the covenant-breakers be taken in their own toils,
14 That they may perceive that the God of Jacob
Rules to the (very) bounds of the earth.

Certainly there is here no sentimental pity for the calamities of the wicked. But neither is there any bloodthirstiness. The Psalmist's one desire is that, whether by the instruction of missionaries or by the sterner teaching of God's retributive judgments, the enemies of true religion may perceive and confess their error.

Lastly, the 22nd verse, though it properly refers, not to any individual, but to the Jewish people, may quite naturally be *applied* by the Christian to the foundation of the Church upon a living Christ, for where would morality and religion be to-day if Jesus Christ were no longer a living force, a living personality, but were still "holden by the bonds of death"?

But I am anticipating. At present we have only to note the fact that both the Huguenot and the old Anglican theories are based on an imperfect survey of the contents of the Psalm, in the form in which it has come down to us. If the maintainers of those theories had had

the "courage of their opinions," they ought to have omitted those portions of the Psalm which were inconsistent with their respective interpretations of it. Of course, it was that reverence for the letter of Scripture, which in former days was a necessary safeguard of religion, that prevented them from doing so. But is there any reason why we modern Protestant Christians should not cull the choicest verses of the Psalm, and use them as a song of thanksgiving for God's mercies in Christ? I have ventured to recommend this course in dealing with one of the Whitsunday Psalms (lxviii.); why should I not do so with regard to the 118th, and propose the omission of verses 7 and 10–12 in the Psalm appointed for use in Anglican churches? I know of only one reason why I should not—viz., that the words, "But (in verse 14, *for*) in the name of the Lord I will destroy them," are based upon a text which is most certainly corrupt. The words "but I will destroy them" are incorrect; the right reading of the line gives this much improved sense, "In Yahwè's name they shall be put to shame." There is now no necessity for mutilating the 118th Psalm; in fact, the Psalm can scarcely

do without verses 10–12, which probably refer to the Messianic judgment. In verse 10 the Psalmist makes a transition from the smaller trouble, out of which Yahwè has just delivered his people, to the great closing trial when all nations will, according to the eschatology of the prophets, combine to war against Jerusalem. Even though this great army should have come about the holy city, yet the name, or presence, of Israel's God would be an all-sufficient defence.

Should all nations have encompassed me,
In Yahwè's name they would be put to shame.
Should they even have encompassed me like bees,
In Yahwè's name they would be put to shame.
Should they have flamed up like a fire among thorns,
In Yahwè's name they would be put to shame.

I now turn to the special reason for the selection of this Psalm for Easter Day. Putting aside strained applications of passages not legitimately applicable, we may dwell for a while on verse 22 (Bible version),

The stone which the builders refused
Is become the head-stone of the corner,

or, translating differently, "the most pro-

minent stone"; or (the phrases in Hebrew can be used synonymously) "the foundation-stone."* We find this verse or couplet again and again applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament, but the passage which most concerns us now is Acts iv. 11. The quotation is remarkable, both for its insertion of the word "you" before "builders," and for the context in which it stands.

"Be it known unto you all," says St. Peter, "and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

Then follows the quotation, with the insertion of the little word "you," which altogether alters the sense of the passage. In the original context it is clear that the "builders" —if the term has any special reference at all, and is not merely a proverbial detail— are non-Israelites — viz., the Babylonian, Persian, or Greek kings who sought to found an extensive empire, and who, after

* In justification of this, see article "Corner-stone," "Encyclopædia Biblica," vol. i. (A. & C. Black, 1899).

robbing Israel of its independence, treated it with contempt as the lowest and most insignificant of all the subject nations. But, according to the speaker in Acts, the "builders" are the "rulers and elders and scribes" of the Jews, whose business was to keep the secular and spiritual organisation of their people in good repair. These incompetent "builders" ought to have recognised the preciousness of the "stone" set before them in the person of Jesus; but instead, they set at nought and rejected Him. But the master-builder of the house of Israel (Ps. cxxvii. 1) defeated their machinations. By being raised from the dead, Jesus became the "head of the corner," or rather (as we have seen) the foundation-stone of the new house of the true Israel. Upon this "rock" (viz. "the Christ, the Son of the Living God") God built His congregation (ecclesia= the congregation of the true Israel), against which all the powers of the "gates of Hades" should not prevail* (Matt. xvi. 16, 18).

Some little interference with the original

* See article "Binding and Loosing," "Encyclopædia Biblica," vol. i.

sense of the Psalm is doubtless necessary if it is to be used in Christian worship. But the interference of the New Testament writer is not a violent one, and it suggests to modern Christians a way of applying the passage, so as to fit it for the Easter celebration. It is the true Israel, the "congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the world," which cries to God as in the 116th Psalm, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." Again and again the true Israel has been reduced by persecution and by the inroads of the secular spirit, to a mere handful. Then, "when times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord," the spiritual Israel revives again, and is once more able to influence, and in some degree transform, the nations of the earth, so that it can sing:

> I will give thanks to thee, because thou hast answered me,
> And hast become my deliverance.
> The stone which the builders rejected
> Has become the foundation-stone.

For in truth the Church, or the true Israel, which is the "salt of the earth," is, from one

point of view, the foundation-stone of the new Jerusalem which is still being built.

And since the Church is the "body of Christ," and dates its origin from the departure of Jesus to His Father, we may not less truly say that the Church's Lord has a prior claim to be called "the stone which the builders refused," but which "has become the foundation-stone." Thus, with some omissions, or if the corrections proposed above be accepted, the whole of this eucharistic Psalm may fitly be used at any time, but most of all on high days, like Easter, by the Christian congregation. It is well adapted to be used as a processional hymn, and as such it may perhaps have been originally written.

PSALM CXXXII

PSALM CXXXII

"THIS Psalm," says a pious and learned theologian,* "is appointed to be used on Christmas Day because it declares David's earnest desire to find a habitation for the Lord, and because it records the promise which God made to David, after he had brought up the Ark of the Lord to the place of its rest on Mount Zion. In that promise God assured him that He would raise Christ from the fruit of his body, and would give everlasting continuance to his seed and to his monarchy in Him. Hence, therefore, the Church of England, with much propriety, adopts these words on Christmas Day (so likewise the Sarum Use and Latin Use), when she thanks God for the fulfilment of that promise in the incarnation of the Son of God, tabernacling in Man's nature, and born

* Bishop Christopher Wordsworth.

at Bethlehem, the city of David, and perpetuating David's kingdom in His own everlasting sway."

These words have the ring of strong conviction, and make claims which need the support of strong evidence. If they are correct we are deeply indebted to the authors of the different Uses mentioned for discovering Christ in the prophecy of Nathan, and for obtaining certain knowledge that the Ark placed by David on Mount Zion was a type of the Incarnate Son of God, born at Bethlehem. The same divine makes the following comment on Ps. cxxxii. 6:

"Some suppose that Ephratah is here used as the name of the region where Kirjath-jearim lay, whence the Ark was brought up to Zion by David. Kirjath-jearim was peopled by the descendants of Ephratah, the wife of Caleb, and was thus connected with Bethlehem. Hence the region around Kirjath-jearim was called Ephrata. But another interpretation seems to be preferable; Ephratah here means Bethlehem, as usually in Holy Scripture, and the Psalmist says that David himself, even when a youth in Bethlehem-Ephratah,

heard of the sojourn of the Ark in Kirjath-jearim, and that it was a fond dream of David's boyhood to be permitted to bring up the Ark to some settled habitation which he desired to find. He *heard* of the Ark when he was at Bethlehem-Ephratah, formerly a heathen town called Baalah (from Baal), to which the Ark had been banished, and he brought up the sacred treasure, when he had found it, to Zion. The words 'we found it' are explained by 1 Chron. xiii. 3, whence it appears that the Ark was almost *lost* in the days of Saul. It was almost buried in the forest shades of Kirjath-jearim. This interpretation has the advantage of being more in accordance with the Christian significance of this Psalm, which has been appointed for use on the Festival of the Nativity at Bethlehem. The Church hears of Christ at Bethlehem in Judah, and He is found by her at Kirjath-jearim, even in the sylvan wilds of Gentile lands."

So far this commentator, who claims on behalf of the older Church an insight which it had not, and should not be expected to have, into obscure passages of the ancient Hebrew literature. If they are dark, it is, as

he thinks, "with excess of light," and the darkness does but veil a bright and glorious mystery. Ephratah is Bethlehem, because the Lord Jesus was born there; the forest shades of Kirjath-jearim are an inspired symbol of the "sylvan wilds of Gentile lands." But let us not be too severe on this imaginative exegesis; the effect of which indeed is weakened by the admission that the Psalm is post-exilic. And this is no doubt correct. The affinity of this Psalm to the 89th has been noticed by a very early commentator (Theodoret), and Ps. lxxxix. is undoubtedly subsequent to the fall of the Davidic family.

Now to admit the Psalm to be post-exilic greatly impairs its value as a commentary on events of the life of David. It must also be added that the explanation given of verse 6 is so fanciful that it suggests a doubt whether the text can have been rightly handed down. And we find, as might be expected, that several scholars have endeavoured to make plausible corrections of the text. One of the most recent critics,* for instance, would read,

* Baethgen.

Yea, we have heard it in Ephratah,
We have published it in wooded country,

where "it" is referred to the words of David in verses 3–5, which first made an impression on the citizens of Bethlehem-Ephratah, and then on the rest of the population, one town sending on the news of David's declaration to another. But the true text appears to be very different :

Surely, the resting-place of his glory
The Holy One of Israel has caused us to find.

All the elaborate argumentation of Delitzsch and Wordsworth is baseless,* and the most definite reason which has been offered for reciting Ps. cxxxii. on Christmas Day (viz. the supposed mention of Bethlehem-Ephratah, which occurs in Mic. v. 2—a Messianic prophecy) disappears. It still remains to ask whether any of the thoughts which occur to us on Christmas Day are germinally present in the 132nd Psalm.

Certainly we cannot reckon among these the idea with which the Psalter opens :

* For further information, see the article "Kirjath-jearim" in the forthcoming "Encyclopædia Biblica" (A. & C. Black).

Remember, O Yahwè, in David's behalf
All that he underwent.*

To say that the trouble which David took in conquering Jerusalem and preparing a resting-place for the Ark was worthy of being recompensed to distant generations of Israelites involves a serious misapprehension. Some recompense no doubt the English David, Alfred the Great, may still be enjoying in the prosperity of the England of to-day and the respect paid to his memory by representative Englishmen in the present year. But he is only one of those who founded that prosperity, and David was not the only great man among the founders of the Jewish people. And when the nations receive retribution, as prophecy warns us to expect, it will be for their own culminating merit or demerit, and not, except inclusively, for that of the far-off past.

There is only one verse in the Psalm which seems to me poetically suggestive of deep thoughts, and that is the 14th, rendered in the A.V.:

* The received text, however, has "all his affliction" (R.V.). "All his piety" is also possible.

PSALM CXXXII

This is my resting-place for ever;
Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.

Those who allow themselves to use the Bible as they use Shakespeare—*i.e.* as a treasure-house of suggestive sentences, will perhaps apply these words on Christmas Day to the birth of the Lord Jesus, and still more fitly to His baptism, which (see on Ps. ii.) very possibly coincided in point of time with a crisis in our Lord's inner life. I mean that those who are sensitive to poetical suggestions may give these words a new turn, and use the rest of the Psalm simply as a framework for this beautiful saying, which reminds us of the words of the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Those who use the Psalms habitually in those "shrines of psalmody," the cathedrals, are inevitably led to such poetical applications.

Applications, we should call them, not interpretations. There is not a line in the Old Testament which was spoken with a conscious reference to Christ, and this 14th verse was intended by the Psalmist to refer not to the Messiah (a very imperfect Messiah it would

have been in such a poor Psalm), but to Mount Zion. We apply it to Jesus Christ, if in our church service we do so apply it, on the twofold ground that God could not possibly dwell in a building in the same degree in which He dwelt in Jesus, and that Jesus lives eternally, whereas the Temple at Jerusalem was destroyed. By thus gently stretching the Psalmist's words we glorify them. The old Church writers meant to do the like with other passages of the Psalm, but they had to put pressure upon the words in order to do this. They fail to show that subtlety which the old Jewish Rabbis often display, and which, to judge from Matt. xxii. 32, the Lord Jesus possessed in large measure.

There are some critics who think that when Jesus says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19), He refers not to the temple of Christ's body, but to the Jewish people, in which in some true sense God dwelt, and to the society of believers in the true Messiah to which a fuller measure of the indwelling of the divine spirit was assured, and which might be said to replace the old imperfect community held together by the observance of the Law.

However this may be, the idea is a true one —that the less materialistic our religion is, the more we can depend on the "holy comfort" of the Spirit's presence. The more we dwell on forms, the more we resemble the congregation which worshipped in the Temple; the more we aspire after immediate communion with the Eternal Word, the more we can depend on the permanence of our spiritual temple. Forms become obsolete, doctrines change their form, but the deep and simple truths enunciated by the most spiritual evangelist last for ever. Of these and of all who live by them the Psalmist's words are true:

> This is my resting-place for ever;
> Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.

These thoughts may serve as an anodyne to those who are troubled at the appointment of Ps. cxxxii. for use on Christmas Day. Still we ought not to withhold the confession that we regard that appointment as a misfortune. Nor should we hesitate to maintain that the arrangement of proper Psalms for use on festivals needs, throughout, much revision. There is no disparagement to the Prayer

Book involved in this. If the old Latin Prayer Book was judged by the men of the sixteenth century to need revision, may not the old English Prayer Book be judged to need such revision by the men of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? One of the smallest reforms would be to give alternative psalms and canticles for certain high days, and certain groups of psalms and canticles for use at the option of the minister in lieu of the psalms for the day. I speak of canticles as well as of psalms. For I fail to see why God, whose inspiration takes such various forms, should not, now that the need arises, raise up a class of inspired religious poets in the service of the Christian Church. Such a canticle as that which begins,

> Blessed be the Lord God of ages, who never ceaseth
> to draw more nigh:
> His voice in the morning of the world was heard
> from far;
> In the evening he speaketh at the door, and entereth
> to abide with us for ever,

seems to me full of the spirit of the noblest Biblical canticles. If it does not appear to us as worthy an expansion of Biblical germs

as the *Magnificat*, it is chiefly because of the sweet associations of the latter, and the prevalent but very doubtful belief that the Magnificat was uttered by the mother of Christ. Surely, too, there are passages in the "Imitation of Christ" which have at least as much claim as many of the Psalms to be sung in our churches, though discrimination would have to be shown in their selection. There are some passages, too, of our best poets which can hardly be placed far below passages of the Bible in the quality of inspiration. For inspiration is not merely a fact but a quality.

To appreciate the quality of inspiration we must read the works which possess it in the right moods. The music of our cathedrals is one of the greatest helps in the production of those moods. "Lift up my soul," we pray; nothing perhaps conveys God's answer to that prayer more effectually than cathedral music. Should we not then bestow some pains on the revision of our canticles? It is for the Church, after having all well-considered opinions, to give a final answer to this question.