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all that were appointed to him, and now those who knew and loved him have to go "forward over his grave." That it is not easy for us to do; but as he had a singularly high and cheerful courage himself, and resolutely held fast to the faith that the forces that seem at times to smite so blindly are controlled by the "unseen Pity that holds our life in its great hands," we shall best honour his memory by setting ourselves patiently and resolutely to do it.

ANDREW HARPER.

PSALM LXVIII.

"*LET God arise, let his enemies be scattered;*
And let them that hate him flee before him."

These words and those which follow, in the striking old French version, formed a war-song of the Huguenots, those Maccabees of Reformed Christianity. The psalm was not indeed intended as a war-song; from the beginning to the end the only fighter mentioned is that invincible one, Jehovah Sabáoth. But who can blame these heroes for so employing the *Exsurgat Deus*? Never in modern times have there been soldiers of such steadfast faith as the Huguenots (except it be Cromwell's Ironsides), and so deeply possessed with the truth that the best equipments of war are of no avail without the help of God. The spirit of the psalms had passed into their lives, and though we may not read the psalms precisely as they read them, yet it would be an object worthy of a Chrysostom to make English people sympathise more with the Huguenot feeling towards the Psalter. It is true, the modern Chrysostom will have a harder task than his predecessor; for unless he has assimilated the method and the best results of criticism, he will not be competent to teach those who most need to

be taught. Somewhere perhaps he is even now passing through his varied discipline, human and Divine; and while we are waiting for him, let us listen to the golden-tongued preacher of Antioch, as he stirs up the indolent Christians of his own day to a more intelligent use of the treasures of the Psalter.

"The words of this psalm are universally known; men continue to sing them all through life, but they know not the meaning of the things spoken. One may justly find fault with those who sing the same words every day, but do not investigate the thoughts which are stored up in them. And yet if any one saw a pure and limpid water, he could not refrain from going near, and touching and drinking it; or if he frequented a meadow, he could not bear to leave it without gathering a few flowers. But you who, from your earliest age to your latest years, practise this psalm, are content to know the words alone, and sit by a hidden treasure, and carry about a sealed purse, and not one of you is moved by curiosity to acquaint himself with that which is said. Nor can you excuse your sleep by the clearness of the meaning; for it is most unclear." [1]

St. Chrysostom is speaking of the 141st Psalm, the ordinary evening psalm of the Eastern Church. But his words may still be applied, though I hope in a less degree, to many of the psalms which Anglican Churchmen at any rate repeat in their daily services. Do not let us accuse the great preacher of austerity. St. Chrysostom held up no impossible standard. He was not a mere cloistered cenobite; he studied men as well as books, and sympathised with the difficulties of the various classes of his people. In expounding another psalm (xlii.) he earnestly recommends his hearers to be constantly repeating the psalms, both at home and in their walks abroad, as a preservative against temptation, even if they do not understand the meaning of the words. "For," he says, "the tongue is sanctified by the words when they are spoken with a well-disposed mind." It is clear however that he

[1] *Hom. in Ps. CXL.* (cxli.).

only makes this concession to beginners in the hallowed practice of psalmody; for elsewhere he is urgent on the necessity of both praying and singing praise with the understanding, and reckons it among the advantages of true psalmody that it does not require the aid of the tongue. This, St. Chrysostom thinks, is what the psalmist means by the words, "Bless Jehovah, O my soul"; for it is only too easy, as he can sadly testify, for the spirit to flag in accompanying the sacred words.

The 68th Psalm is one of those which most require explanation for the ordinary reader. Slowly and gradually have trained students been penetrating its historical sense; and it is not surprising that teachers who have drawn their views of its meaning from an uncritical tradition should have cast but little light upon it, and that mostly deceptive. Were I addressing a Church Congress instead of writing for THE EXPOSITOR, I should endeavour to excuse the backwardness of preachers and of the accredited Church literature in the exposition of psalms like the 68th. I should point out that the wants of the Church are so varied, and the number of subjects pressing for recognition in theological examinations so large, that we can hardly be surprised if a comparatively new subject like the historical study of the psalms fails to make its existence adequately realized. But I should add that in our cathedrals and other scarcely less important churches an example ought to be set both by those who preach and by those who hear: by those who preach in devoting more study than formerly to the historical meaning of the psalms, and developing a legitimate Christian meaning out of this; and by those who hear in absorbing fresh knowledge and making it fruitful for their own Bible study. For instance, the Church of England attaches great weight to the 68th Psalm, which it appoints to be said or sung, not only once a month in the ordinary course, but on Whitsunday. But

must not an open-minded clergyman anxiously ask, how far and in what sense this psalm can any longer be set apart for that high day? Historical criticism was hardly yet in its infancy when the English Reformers compiled or rearranged the Prayer-Book, and it is perfectly conceivable that we might have to make on their behalf a confession of error. Let us examine into the circumstances of the case; more than merely Anglican Church interests are concerned.

From the very outset we must regard this psalm in its true light as a grand historical ode, one of those to which we can most confidently appeal in confirmation of the theory that the Old Testament is a literature. There are indeed other historical psalms—psalms with a wide sweep of historical reference—but they are didactic; whereas in the 68th the glories of the past and the hopes and fears of the present are fused together by the central fire of a deeply stirred emotion. The psalm falls into two parts, dividing at ver. 19. The first four verses consist of an appeal to Jehovah to deliver Israel, and a summons to the people to prepare for His coming. Then begins a magnificent historical retrospect. The psalmist can look back upon two great returns of the Israelites to Canaan; and if he lays much more stress upon one than upon the other, it is because the return from Egypt was the consecrated type both of that from Babylon and of that which, even after the second return, fervent Israelites craved (see ver. 22) from the distant lands of the Dispersion. In ver. 6 however the psalmist clearly refers to the fulfilment of the great prophecy of the Second Isaiah. He says:

"*God maketh the desolate to return home;*
He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity:
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land."

Here the "parched land" is Babylon, where the refreshing streams which flow from Zion are unknown; the "desolate" and the "prisoners" are those who, unlike

the careless or rebellious Israelites, feel their privations, and long to return to their soul's true home. Observe, the psalmist generalizes from the facts of Israel's experience of God's redeeming love at Babylon. He who so gloriously interposed to deliver His people will surely do so again. Israel personified can still most truly say,

"*For thy sake I have borne reproach;*
Shame hath covered my face."[1]

And though at present his destruction as a nation seems, humanly speaking, certain, he—that is, the righteous who constitute the true Israel—can "rejoice and triumph" before the God whose victorious advent they anticipate. We shall see later on what extraordinary faith the jubilant words of vers. 3, 4 imply.

In vers. 7–18 we have a highly poetic sketch of the journey through the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, and the occupation of Mount Zion by the great King. It is gemmed with fine quotations from ancient songs, one of which we still possess in full; it is the Song of Deborah in Judges v. These quotations do not always carry their meaning on their front; all the more they stimulate us to think. And if we do spend a little thought upon them, we shall be rewarded. We shall not indeed find Scripture proofs of Christian doctrine, or suitable texts for missionary sermons and addresses. It is an ideal world in which, fancy-free, the poet roams. Attended by His hosts, Jehovah transfers His holy habitation from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion. There are the hosts of heaven, "*chariots of God, many myriads, thousands upon thousands*" (ver. 17); and there are the hosts of earth, as weak as those of heaven are strong, and yet the special objects of Jehovah's protecting care. It is for them that He leaves the most ancient of the mounts of God, where already He has appeared unto Moses, and where, as an

[1] Ps. lxix. 7.

exceptional favour, the fugitive prophet Elijah was again to find Him in years to come, and to witness that Divine acted parable, the depths of which he failed perhaps to fathom. Long since indeed Jehovah had chosen Canaan to be His inheritance; but not till the tribes of Jacob were ready to become the people of the true God did Canaan become, in fact as well as in right, the Holy Land. And when did the tribes of Israel become Jehovah's people, and Jehovah become Israel's God? At the giving of the law.[1] Then it was that, as the psalmist says, quoting from the Song of Deborah, "*even yon Sinai trembled at the presence of God, the God of Israel*" (ver. 8); or, in the words of the story in Exodus, "*there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount,*" and when Jehovah came down, "*the whole mount quaked greatly*" (Exod. xix. 16, 18). These were the symbols of that sterner side of the Divine nature which was most prominent to the early men. But was there no evidence of a gentler aspect as well? Yes; "*the heavens,*" as the poet tells us, "*dropped* (with water)," and the rain, which was lost upon the peaks of Sinai, fell in gracious, fertilizing abundance on the land of Canaan.

"*Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,*
Thou didst restore thine inheritance, when it was weary.
Thy congregation (or, thine army) *dwelt therein* (*i.e.* in Canaan);
In thy goodness, O God, thou didst prepare for the poor" (vers. 9, 10).

Next we have a scene from the early wars of the Israelites with the Canaanitish kings.

"*The Lord giveth the word;*
The women that publish the tidings are a great host" (ver. 11).

The Lord Himself, that is, raises the battle-cry; victory

[1] See Deut. xxxiii. 2–5.

follows, and choruses of singing women celebrate the event among all the tribes of Israel.

The next three verses may be a fragment from one of the songs which these gifted women chanted.

Ver. 15 places us among the Israelites warring with Og, the king of Bashan. That highland region has its sacred mountains, not less than Arabia. And the poet, somewhat like the author of the ascension fragment which we studied not long since in the 24th Psalm, who endows palace-gates with the faculty of speech, represents the grand mountain-range of Bashan as casting jealous eyes at the little mountain which Jehovah has prepared on the other side of Jordan. For at length, though the details are omitted, the poet would have us understand that the triumphal march is finished. The mighty Warrior, with His chariots of angels, "*hath come* (as ver. 17 says) *from Sinai into the sanctuary.*" And the poet concludes the first part of the ode with the cry of praise,—

"*Thou hast gone up to the height to abide;*
Jehovah, thou hast carried away captives; thou hast received gifts,
Among men, yea, even among the rebellious."[1]

The height which Jehovah ascends is clearly not the heavenly, but the earthly sanctuary; for we are told that He carries with Him His "captives," and the "gifts" or "tribute" which He has received among men, no longer "rebellious" to His will. And the comfort which the psalmist draws from his now completed historical retrospect is, that Jehovah's residence on Mount Zion will not be of as short a duration as that on Mount Sinai, but that He has ascended up on high to abide. Twice within these verses this significant word "abide" is used with reference to Jehovah; and since He is the same

[1] In justification of this rendering, I cannot help referring to my commentary (1888).

yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the victory which was the prelude to His royal entrance into Jerusalem was a prophecy of many another victory in times to come.

In what sense can the Christian use this part of the psalm? It is of course edifying to see how a religious Jewish poet read his nation's history; but is there any distinctively Christian, and more especially any Whitsuntide, application that we can make of these verses? A simple-minded reader of the New Testament will perhaps reply by pointing to that most beautiful exhortation to unity in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, where the apostle illustrates the truth that all spiritual gifts come from one God through one Mediator by quoting the eighteenth verse of our psalm in an incorrect form, using the liberty then, even more than now, accorded to a preacher. But though, as we sing the psalm, we may sometimes recall with interest this passage in Ephesians, we cannot, as thinking men, justify the Whitsuntide use of this psalm by St. Paul's inaccurate quotation. It may perhaps help us to remember that this was one of the special psalms for the Jewish day of Pentecost. That festival was held in later times to commemorate the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and Psalm lxviii. was doubtless connected with the feast on account of its description of the awful phenomena reported in the twentieth of Exodus, when the people trembled and stood afar off, for they were afraid to meet God.[1]

But the Christian Feast of Pentecost commemorates a greater event than the giving of the decalogue—even that mighty inspiration by which the apostles, as representatives of the Church, were fitted to continue Christ's work in Christ's spirit. And I think that we may find an anticipation of this second and greater coming of God in the latter verses of this section of the ode. Jehovah has not come

[1] Exod. xx. 18, 19.

down for a time only, with thunder and lightning and earthquake, but to abide, as the Author of peace and the Father of mercies, for evermore in His temple. And what, from a Christian point of view, is His temple? A material building? No: the Church of Christ, and therefore each member of that Church, in so far as he is one with Christ by faith.

At this point (ver. 19) the second part begins in the language of benediction.

"*Blessed be the Lord!*
Day by day he beareth us (or, *beareth our burden*),
Even the God who is our salvation."

A different strain this from—

"*Blessed be Jehovah my Rock!*
Who teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight." [1]

The poet who wrote these words lived at a time when Israel, full of martial prowess, could fight for the accomplishment of God's purposes. But now Israel is too feeble, too depressed, to dream of self-defence, and if God does not soon interpose, will be torn in pieces by the ruthless potentates who are contending over his body. The psalmist's function is to keep alive the spirit of trust in God. Outwardly Israel may have been brought very low, but inwardly he has still cause enough for soaring on the wings of faith. There are in fact two Israels: the one which is "despised and rejected of men"; the other which is invisibly borne up on angels' wings, lest he dash his foot against a stone. And corresponding to these two Israels, we find two classes of utterances in the Psalter, one which is represented by the words,

"*How long, Jehovah, wilt thou forget me for ever?*" [2]

and the other by the courageous profession of faith in ver. 20 of our psalm,—

[1] Ps. cxliv. 1. [2] Ps. xiii. 1.

"*God is unto us a God of deliverances;*
And unto Jehovah the Lord belong the issues from death."

Israel's God has not lost His ancient strength, nor has He "forgotten to be gracious." Still does He direct the affairs of His people from His holy hill of Zion; still does He grant new prophetic revelations, or disclose the present meaning of the old. One of these old or new oracles points to a great restoration of Jewish exiles, preceding an awful judgment upon Jehovah's enemies (see vers. 21–23). From this the poet draws fresh hope, and he still further encourages himself by the proofs which the well-attended festival processions of his day supply of the unbroken connexion between God and His Church.

"*They have seen thy goings, O God,*
Even the goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary."

And then follows a description of the procession. The singers and players upon instruments take the lead, surrounded by damsels, like Miriam, playing on timbrels. After this comes the laity in general. Four tribes only take part, two belonging to Judæa, and two to Galilee—the two provinces into which the Jewish territory was divided in the post-Exile period.

"*Then went little Benjamin before,*
The chiefs of Judah in its bands,
The chiefs of Zebulun, the chiefs of Naphtali" (ver. 27).

The tribe of Benjamin was always a small one—hence the epithet "little," which has no mystic reference, as the Fathers uncritically supposed,[1] to the Apostle Paul. The "chiefs" (or, princes) are the elders, one or more of whom would naturally precede the representatives of each district. But there was One invisibly present, without whom the procession would have lost its sanctity. In the olden days, the ark would have been carried at the head of the procession, the ark which was revered as the material pledge

[1] So even Theodoret.

of Jehovah's presence. But those who devoutly used the psalms could not possibly want what had only been given for a time for the hardness of men's hearts. They knew that God was everywhere present, though they could not see Him, and more specially present in the assemblies of the Church. Hence the poet boldly ventures on the phrase "thy goings," just as if the Lord, according to the prophecy of Malachi, had suddenly come in person to His temple.[1]

Encouraged by the vigorous church-life thus exemplified, the psalmist rises into the tone of prayer. May He who has again and again "wrought" for Israel "strengthen" His work in our day (ver. 28)! And now, instead of picturing the routed enemy overtaken by God's just vengeance, as in the two opening verses, a new and more blessed vision passes before his eyes. It is a new sort of religious procession which he sees—distant kings hastening to Jerusalem with presents for the King of kings. But how can this be realized while Israel's land is no better than a football to the great rival kings of Egypt and Syria—the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, of whom we read in veiled language in the eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel? Hence the poet utters an earnest prayer for the humiliation of these proud heathen kingdoms. "The wild beast of the reeds" (not "the company of the spearmen") means Egypt, whose symbol was leviathan; while "the troop of bulls, of lords of peoples," probably refers to the mercenaries of various nations of the extensive empire of the Syrian kings (ver. 30). When these proud empires have been "rebuked," *i.e.* restrained and humiliated, then will Israel be at liberty to assume its peaceful, educational functions for the nations of the world. Then will the bold predictions of the Second Isaiah be fulfilled; Egypt and Ethiopia shall become the voluntary vassals of Israel: "*After thee shall they go, and in chains pass over; and unto thee shall they bow down, unto*

[1] Mal. iii. 1.

thee shall they pray, Of a truth in thee is God; and there is none else, no Godhead at all."[1] For the chains, as any one must see, are those of affectionate reverence, by which these noble proselytes are linked to those who unfold to them the way of truth. Or, as the psalmist puts it,—

"*(Then) shall they come in haste out of Egypt;*
Quickly shall Ethiopia stretch out her hands unto God."

The psalmist is not in the mood for following out the train of thought naturally suggested by this prospect. We have seen in a previous Study how another temple-singer treats the grand theme of the conversion of the nations. With the thought of Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God our poet closes what I may call the historical part of the ode. His fears for Israel's future are allayed. He has "considered the days of old, and the years that are past." He has reflected on the many proofs of Israel's present devotion to its God. He has presented the Church's earnest prayer, and, relying on the unchangeableness of the Divine nature, he can have no doubt as to the result.

The 68th psalm is a poem of grandly wide compass, and reveals no ordinary degree of art. The singing-robes of David were taken up by some who almost equalled him in gifts, and far surpassed him in culture. The psalm is also a fine monument of post-Exile religion. It shows us how, even in dark days, when ruin menaced from without, and inward moral decay was visible in the highest family of the State, there was still a Church of true believers, who read their past history in the light of their religion, and were encouraged by it to wait patiently, and even rejoicingly, for their God. We have seen how we may still repeat the first part of the ode at Whitsuntide, and we shall, I think, agree that the missionary prospect with which the second part closes makes it equally fit with the first for our Christian Pentecost-day. It is the missionary idea which

[1] Isa xlv. 14; cf. xliii. 3.

prompts the grand thanksgiving which concludes the psalm, and in which all nations of the earth are summoned to join.

"*O kingdoms of the earth, sing ye unto God,*
Make ye melody unto the Lord" (ver. 32).

For the conversion of Egypt and Ethiopia, anticipated in ver. 31, is but like the first droppings of a shower. The words of another psalmist,

"*All nations whom thou hast made*
Shall come and worship before thee, Jehovah,
And shall glorify thy name," [1]

have found an echo in our poet's heart. His summons to all the heathen nations to glorify God for His deliverance of Israel implies that they have at least understood that Israel is to be the first-born among many brethren, and that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. They have, in short, received into their hearts the germ of the true religion. Inwardly as well as outwardly the power of heathenism has been broken. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God,"—it remains for the Christian to add—"and of His Christ." Can we not then, without the least unfaithfulness to historical truth and to sound biblical interpretation, continue to read and to repeat the 68th psalm in the services of the Christian Church?

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[1] Ps. lxxxvi. 9.