

growing one, even if his felt dependence was absolute throughout.

Thus we should expect that the particular exposition of the doctrine of Christ set forth in the first chapter of the Epistle should be directed towards the special circumstances of the Church at Colossæ, and that the errors indicated in the second chapter were such as needed the special unfolding of the riches of Christ. The two hang together.

The doctrine set forth is such as to meet the situation, and the errors are such as needed that form of exposition. Underlying both is the persuasion of the Apostle that Christ is sufficient to meet all difficulties, whether speculative or practical, and that if men could only learn Christ and know Him, they would be safe from every danger, and secure in every situation.

(To be continued.)

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ACTS.

ACTS v. 31.

Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.

It is interesting to trace the rapid development which took place in St. Peter after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. He stood out at once as the foremost of the Apostles, not only with a new courage of faith, but also with gifts of speech hitherto latent. His first sermon showed how clearly he had grasped the gospel, and how firm was his conviction of its truth. But from this start he made remarkable progress in fulness of Christian knowledge, in strength of assurance, and in courage of spirit.

1. There is a progress in his view of Jesus Christ. In his first sermon he spoke of Him as a man approved of God, and closed by saying, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.' In his address to the people at Solomon's porch, he spoke of Jesus Christ as the Holy and Righteous One, and as the Author of life. Now he advances still further and declares that He is exalted by God to be a Prince and a Saviour. St. Peter's belief in Jesus Christ expanded and took in new elements through the inspiration of the Spirit.

2. There is also a growing assurance. From the first he did not hesitate in his avowal of faith in the risen Redeemer; but as his thoughts of Jesus Christ were heightened and enlarged, his conviction gained strength, which no authority of

Sanhedrin, or tradition of the fathers, could shake or disturb.

3. With growing assurance his courage also grew. It was strengthened partly by opposition and partly by the manifest help and interposition of God. He fearlessly addressed the assembled multitude who listened eagerly to his words; but afterwards, when brought before the Sanhedrin, and again, on his release from prison, he said boldly, 'We must obey God rather than men.' Thus he justified the name which His Master had given him, and proved himself to be the rock-like disciple.

How can we grow in faith? It begins very simply, when we believe in God's existence, but it develops on all sides, till it embraces the following splendid elements:—

Assurance of God's pardon and love;
 Unfailing confidence in His providential wisdom;
 Perfect assurance that He answers our prayers;
 Utter repose in His guardianship to all Eternity;
 The disappearance of fear;
 The ability to do all 'in God.'

'There is the same glow,' says the great philologist, Max Müller, 'about the setting sun as there is about the rising sun; but there lies between the two a whole world, a journey through the whole sky and over the whole earth.' The child's faith is the rising sun; the faith of the dying saint is the setting sun.¹

I.

THE EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

'Him did God exalt.'

In our text the Apostle reaches the highest note he has yet struck, and says, 'Him did God exalt

¹ J. A. Clapperton, *Culture of the Christian Heart*, 46.

with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.'

St. Peter in making this assertion was speaking by the Spirit. The transcendent act which it describes was invisible to human eyes; it was transacted in the unseen world. But St. John in Patmos is represented as having a vision which demonstrated its truth, and exhibited its glory. He heard a voice, and when he turned to see the voice, the exalted Saviour appeared before him, holding in His hand seven stars, and with a countenance which shone as the sun.

(1) There is contrast between Jesus in His humiliation and Jesus in His glory. On earth, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant. He was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He moved among men as one of themselves, and knew what it was to be weary, hungry, and cast down in spirit. He was of the common people, poor and heavy laden, often not knowing where to lay His head. But in His exaltation all that had passed away. Instead of a crown of thorns, His head was crowned with many crowns. No longer the Man of Sorrows, He is now the King of glory. And at the sight St. John, as he himself tells us, fell down at His feet as dead. No fact could more fully show the difference there was in external appearance between Christ in His earthly humiliation, and Christ in His heavenly exaltation.

(2) The exaltation was a divine reward. This truth is taught explicitly by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians. Having referred to Christ's humiliation and death, and to His voluntary submission to these things in obedience to the will of God, he proceeds to say, 'Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name.' Our text in the same way ascribes the exaltation of Jesus Christ to God, the translation 'with his right hand' (rather than 'to or at his right hand'), which is to be preferred, clearly emphasizing it. It was by God that Jesus Christ was raised to the Father's throne.

(3) The grand act now before our minds, intended as it was for the benefit of the sons of men, is appropriately attributed to God's right hand. There is developed in it the grace of an infinite Fatherhood, and the might and majesty of the Eternal Throne. It is impossible to understand

the God of the Bible without regarding Him not only as a distinct and glorious personality, but as at once Father and King. It is easy to exaggerate into serious practical error both these ideas. The Fatherhood may be caricatured into a good-natured dotage, which is too kind to punish and has no disposition to insist on full obedience and purity. And the Kingship may, without the moulding and modifying influence of the Fatherhood, be either a stern Majesty which no one can love or an inexorable Justice which leaves the sinner without aught of hope. The Redeemer was exalted by the right hand of the King-Father and Father-King—exalted in His love and in His power.

The descent of our Lord into the sphere of time and sense is a solemn fact to be celebrated with wonder and gratitude, but His exaltation is cause of endless exultation to all His ransomed worshippers. The crown of thorns glows into gold and multiplies into diadems; the marred face makes the sun dim; the pierced hand grasps the universal sceptre; the cross towers and expands into a throne based on the jasper and girdled by the rainbow. Do we think enough, anything like enough, of the royalty of our Master? In all the days when we have the sense of impotence and struggle, let us remember whose we are and whom we serve. In every season of need and solitude let us remind ourselves that our Lord was parted from His disciples whilst blessing them, and although carried up into heaven, He has never ceased that blessing. And let us expect His coming again in like manner. As Andrew Bonar writes: 'How seldom the expression "going to heaven" is used in the Bible! It is rather going to be "with the Lord," as if the Lord wanted to keep our eye on Himself as the heart and soul of heaven.'

II.

HIS TITLES IN HIS EXALTATION.

'A Prince and a Saviour.'

It has been suggested that the words 'to be' should be supplanted by the word 'as'—'Him did God exalt as a Prince and a Saviour.' This would mean that Jesus Christ was really Prince as well as Saviour before His ascension to the Father. But the closing part of the sentence, as well as the general drift of the Apostle's argument, is in favour of the accepted translation. The titles Prince and Saviour in their conjunction, and in the sovereignty which they denote, may be most suitably applied to Jesus Christ only after His exaltation.

(1) The titles must be taken together—Prince

¹ W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 2.

and Saviour, Prince because Saviour, exercising the mercy of Saviour by the power of the Prince.

(2) They are titles of honour. Thus it becomes our duty not only to trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour, but to render homage to Him as Prince.

(3) It is as exalted Prince and Saviour that He wields divine power. Elevation is necessary to influence. Of what advantage is 'a candle under a bushel'?—but place it 'on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.' While the sun is below our earth, all is dark and cold—but when he arises, there is 'healing under his wings'; and from his loftiness in the skies he scatters his enlightening and enlivening beams. When the shrub rises up out of the ground, it rather requires than affords support and assistance—'but when it is grown, it becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.' A man in the obscurity and contractedness of private life may feel dispositions prompting him to do good—but he can only pour forth benevolent wishes and shed ineffectual tears. But give him pre-eminence, place in his hands the reins of empire and at his disposal the treasures of the State, and, lo! thousands are refreshed by his shadow, protected by his power, and enriched by his beauty; his fame spreads encouragement; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. Thus Jesus 'ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.'

On February 23, Mr. Champness returned from a week's visit to England to find all five of the children poorly, and we had a sick house for some weeks, till on March 18 two of our darlings succumbed to the disease. Arthur, two and a half years old, had always been a delicate child, and we were not surprised to have him very ill; complications set in; and the doctor had given us very little hope of his recovery from the first. It was otherwise with Johnnie, our dear eldest boy, the brightest, merriest, and most joyous of them all. Yet for him the message came swiftly, and bore him away before we could realize the truth. They were but babes, but both of them left their mark on the family. The elder was a beautiful singer, and his clear, sweet voice was always ringing through the house. How often has his father thrilled a great congregation to tears by telling the simple story of Johnnie's song! and how the memory of it has inspired him in the hour of conflict and encouraged him in times of despondency, as he seemed to hear the sound of his lad's voice singing:

Come and join the army, the army of the Lord:
Jesus is our Captain, we'll rally at His word:
Sharp will be the conflict with the powers of sin,
But with such a Leader we are sure to win.¹

¹ E. M. Champness, *The Life of Thomas Champness*, 167.

III.

GOD'S PURPOSES THROUGH THE EXALTED CHRIST.

'To give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.'

1. As it is God who with His right hand exalted Christ, so it is God who through Him gives repentance, and remission of sins. Peter by these words made an appeal directly to the Jews and their Rulers. They had committed a great crime, they were bent upon a course which was an aggravation of it and, if persisted in, would involve the nation in the curse, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' But the Apostle declares that God's purpose is not to condemn, but to save. The exalted Christ had completed a work by which Israel if it would repent might be accepted of God, and now that He was glorified He was still the agent by whom their redemption might be effected.

In the morning I took the Bible; and, beginning at the New Testament, I began seriously to read it. . . . It was not long after I set seriously to this work, that I found my heart more deeply and sincerely affected with the wickedness of my past life. The impression of my dream revived, and the words, 'All these things have not brought thee to repentance,' ran seriously in my thoughts. I was earnestly begging of God to give me repentance, when it happened providentially, that very day, that, reading the Scripture, I came to these words, 'He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, and to give remission.' I threw down the book, and, with my heart as well as my hands lifted up to Heaven, in a kind of ecstasy of joy, I cried out aloud, 'Jesus, Thou Son of David, Thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me repentance.' This was the first time that I could say, in the true sense of the word, that I prayed in all my life.²

'But Zion said:

My Lord forgetteth me.
Lo, she hath made her bed
In dust; forsaken weepeth she
Where alien rivers swell the sea.

'She laid her body as the ground,
Her tender body as the ground to those
Who passed; her harp-strings cannot sound
In a strange land; discrowned
She sits, and drunk with woes.'—

'O drunken not with wine,
Whose sins and sorrows have fulfilled the sum,—
Be not afraid, arise, be no more dumb;
Arise shine,
For thy light is come.'—

² *Robinson Crusoe*.

'Can these bones live?'—

'God knows:

The prophet saw such clothed with flesh and skin;
A wind blew on them, and life entered in;
They shook and rose.

Hasten the time, O Lord, blot out their sin,
Let life begin.¹

2. For us the words contain a wider message—a message of life and hope which applies to the whole world with its superstitions, and vices, and needs, and is an answer to all the questions which doubt may raise or philosophy suggest. This world is not under the sway of soulless, unmoral law; it is the sphere of operations of a living and redeeming God. Now to assert that sin is eternal and irremediable in its effect is either to forget God entirely or to say that evil is stronger than God. But just because I believe in the living and personal God, I believe in the remediability of the evils wrought by sin. For God is ever present in the world, working against sin and repairing its ravages. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. When we say that the effects of sin on the individual are eternal, we forget that the living God Himself comes to the forgiven man, and God in a man becomes a fountain of healing, cleansing, and restoring energy. And when I think of the restoring and healing powers of the grace of God, I can believe the old Bible word, that we shall be clean every whit, that we shall be lifted up from the dunghill, set among princes, and made to inherit a throne of glory. That is a significant sentence in the Apocalypse where the angel, describing the multitude before the throne, says, 'These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' They had once borne upon them the stains and defilements

¹ Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 203.

of sin; but every trace of these had disappeared. They stood before the throne in 'spotless white.' And how had they been made white? They had 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' 'Washed in blood'! Now, the blood is the life; and what the phrase means is that the redeeming and cleansing energies of the life of Christ in them had gradually set them absolutely free from every trace and defilement of sin. And we, too, may be 'made white in the blood of the Lamb.' Christ in us is the hope of glory. God is at work in our world, counteracting evil and ever seeking to destroy it. Here is an old word full of comfort for those who are tortured by the thought of evil influences, to which they gave the initial impulse: 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the residue of wrath shalt thou restrain.'

A child said, 'When I say my prayers I always see everything. When I say, 'Deliver us from evil,' I see God going out with a spear to fight Satan; and when I say, Forgive us our trespasses, I see Him with a big rubber cleaning a black-board.' Another little boy of seven years repeated one day the text, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' Then, after thinking for a little, he said, 'I see how it is; the blood of Jesus Christ is God's india-rubber; when it is rubbed over the page of the book where our sins are written, it takes them all away.'²

Rout and defeat on every hand,
On every hand defeat and rout;
Yet through the rent clouds' hurrying rack
The stars look out.

Decay supreme from west to east,
From south to north supreme decay;
Yet still the withered fields and hills
Grow green with May.

In clod and man unending strife,
Unending strife in man and clod;
Yet burning in the heart of man
The fire of God.³

² William Canton, *Children's Sayings*.

³ H. P. Kimball.

Can the Literature of a Divine Revelation be dealt with by Historical Science?

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I HAVE in previous numbers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES dealt with the religious-historical method in its application to Christianity,¹ but return to the

¹ The articles have been included in my book on *The Christian Certainty*.

subject in order to deal more fully with one topic implied rather than discussed in the former treatment, a topic, however, so important as to deserve further consideration. I shall deal with it in trying to answer the questions: (I.) In what sense is history