

issue, the inevitable issue, of this gambling spirit, which has invaded our agora, our ordinary affairs, our social pastimes, and our public sports. It is a craze. It is amongst the most demoralizing epidemics of the century. It is, one may thankfully add, restrained by the fortnightly settling-day, as well as by the regulations of the Stock Exchange, one of which is that no speculative account be allowed for clerks or for persons in a subordinate position, and another of which is that no member of the Stock Exchange is allowed to advertise, or even to circularize the public. The perfidious herd who inundate the clergy and moneyed spinsters with sheaves of paper about "pools" and "options" and "corners" are not members of the Stock Exchange. Thus some restrictions are rigidly imposed. The grand restriction, however, is in Divine principle. It is wrong to make haste to be rich. It is atheistic to exclude God from observing the means by which money is either acquired, or increased, or administered. It is no less so to operate in money outside the laws which He has revealed, or in defiance of these laws. In this, as in most things, we may learn a little from the literature of the intellectual East or of the imperious West. Greece and Rome read out a lesson to the money markets of the age. The Roman Mint was hard by—it adjoined the Roman Temple. When metals became impressed, and when coinage marked the civilization as well as the political life of Greece, the emblems of religion were stamped upon the metal. The one and the other suggest that the principles of religion should pervade the courts of commerce; that money should be sanctified by moral life; that merchant and broker and trader and artisan and labourer should each regard the Eternal Presence as with him in his work, enabling him to toil in accordance with those laws by obedience to which humanity will find labour and sustenance and sympathy and progress, but from the operation of which I firmly believe the acquisition of the gambler to be excluded.

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ART. II.—THE THREE ABIDING GRACES, AS EXHIBITED IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

No. 1.—CHRISTIAN FAITH (IN PSALM XXXI.).

THERE are abundant reasons for concluding that the one hundred and fifty Psalms were, at some period in Jewish history, finally arranged in an elaborate system of seven sections,

with the distinct object of concentrating attention on the coming of Messiah and the glory of His future kingdom upon the earth.<sup>1</sup> Those who set themselves to test the value of this system can scarcely fail to appreciate its beauty and use.<sup>2</sup>

Quite apart, however, from that important arrangement, a triad of psalms may easily be selected to illustrate the three Christian graces which in all ages are the peculiar characteristics of "the Lord's people."

St. Paul wrote in New Testament days, "Now abideth (*μένει*) faith, hope, charity: these three." In order to show how accurately the same inspired song has expressed for successive generations the habitual feelings of every saint, I purpose to consider, in three numbers of THE CHURCHMAN, Psalm xxxi. as, for believers in divers centuries, a *song of Faith*; Psalm lxxxvii. as an equally permanent *song of Hope*; and Psalm cxxxiii. as an ever-suitable *song of Charity*.

FAITH, being the foundation-grace of all true religion, supplies, of course, the key-note to most psalms. Out of very many, like the 25th and the 84th, in which trust in the Lord brilliantly manifests itself, it is difficult to select *the one* which exhibits such confidence most conspicuously.

I have ventured to assign the pre-eminence to Psalm xxxi., because lively trust is there shown under more than common severity of trial.

Who the writer of it was is by some students reckoned doubtful. In spite of modern criticism, I am content to recognise it as originally a psalm of David, whose style<sup>3</sup> it evidently exhibits, and to more than one crisis of whose life<sup>4</sup> it accurately corresponds. But it may have been modified in subsequent times to express the sentiments of more than one later member of "the household of faith." The absence of positive certainty as to its authorship may have been Providentially permitted, in

<sup>1</sup> See the very interesting "Studies on the Book of Psalms," by Dr. John Forbes, Emeritus Professor of Oriental Languages, Aberdeen (T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh).

<sup>2</sup> The First Book of Psalms, for instance, which everyone supposes to close with Ps. xli., is evidently so arranged—i. and xli. at the beginning and end of the book relating to the really happy man—so that there are nineteen Psalms before, and nineteen Psalms after the central trilogy (xx., xxi., xxii.), which refers to "the conflict of the King on behalf of Israel and the whole world": each of those groups of nineteen forming, with the central Psalms, the number (22) of the Hebrew alphabet; whilst Ps. ii., at the commencement of the first nineteen, and Ps. xl., which finishes the second nineteen, describe respectively "the King's conquest of the earth," and "His patient waiting for it."

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Alexander, "The Witness of the Psalms," pp. 320, 321, forcibly points out *five* characteristics of David in this Psalm.

<sup>4</sup> See Geikie, "Hours with the Bible," iii. 164, and Stanley's "Jewish Church," ii. 54.

order that children of God of every country or time<sup>1</sup> might more readily adapt it to their peculiar circumstances.

Whoever was the writer or subsequent editor of it, he was unquestionably—

I. Acquainted with a continued accumulation of troubles. "My life," he declared: "is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." He was at once familiar with taunts, with neglect, and with calumny. "I was a reproach, . . . especially among my neighbours, and a fear to my acquaintance; they that did see me without fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man." (On the "concentrated pathos" of this expression see Bishop Alexander, page 155.) "I am like a broken vessel, for I have heard the slander of many."

"A man is in a piteous plight" (is Mr. Spurgeon's comment, with his usual terseness, on only a part of this description) "when he comes to this." But the Psalmist's surroundings became at times considerably worse, when he was an object against whom a multitude combined with a determined purpose to sweep him into destruction. "Fear was on every side: while they took counsel against me, they devised to take away my life." Yet, notwithstanding the crowding accumulation of his prolonged sorrows,

II. His trust, even though his heart had trembled, returned—like the shaken needle in the compass, which vibrates eventually towards the pole—with grateful steadfastness to his deliberately chosen God. For a few moments, in the hurry of escaping from some specially terrible emergency, he fancied he might be forgotten by the Most High. "I said in my haste,<sup>2</sup> I am cut off from before Thine eye." But the doubt was gone almost before it was harboured. His psalm begins with an unwavering expression of his habitual confidence: "In Thee, O Jehovah, do I put my trust." "Into Thy hand," he could add, with respect to all possible vicissitudes of a very changeable earthly career<sup>3</sup> (in words which the Son of Man and an innumerable company of His followers<sup>4</sup> repeated with respect to the solemn close of that career) "I commend my spirit." Though reproaches grew

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<sup>1</sup> See some very striking remarks by Bishop Alexander, pp. 176, 177, 212, 213, on "The Reversion in the Psalms," for every dispensation, and for every section of Christendom.

<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Sam. xxiii. 26, "And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain, and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul."

<sup>3</sup> One sentence of Calvin, on verse 5, very pointedly declares the universal prevalence of *faith* among the children of God: "Whoever relies not on the providence of God, so as to commit his life to its faithful guardianship, has not yet learned aright what it is to live."

<sup>4</sup> "From the days of Stephen to Huss, and from Huss to the present hour."—Dr. Andrew Bonar.

louder, though terrors thickened, though adversaries multiplied their nefarious schemes, he could still truthfully record: "But I trusted in Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God." Because his deep and growing conviction was, "My times"<sup>1</sup> (however varied and however critical) "are" (not at the disposal of my feeble neighbours or of my proudest foes, but) "in Thine hands." Dr. Andrew Bonar has well epitomized the Psalmist's theme in a single sentence: "The righteous, though forlorn, safe in the hands of the living God." But—

III. The safety was *secured* by persevering cries from the afflicted one to the heavenly Father. The prayer of the truster was (a) calmly based on his well-considered creed: "Be Thou my strong rock . . . for Thou art my cliff and my fortress."<sup>2</sup> (b) Stimulated by the greatness of threatening evil: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble." (c) Joyous, because of past experience: "I will be glad . . . in Thy mercy, for Thou hast considered<sup>3</sup> my trouble." And important as well as much expecting, because of the vastness of present needs: "Deliver me speedily . . . lead me and guide me . . . make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; save me for Thy mercies' sake." The liveliness and the persistency of such confidence *must* arrest the attention of thoughtful readers. They completely justify the admiring exclamation of Dr. Perowne: "Wonderful indeed is the hopeful trust of the saints of old in God, when we remember that they did not know Him as God manifest in the flesh!" But there is only one explanation of this magnificent confidence—

IV. Such trust is Divinely created. As it was explained of those, unlike the majority, who "received" the Redeemer, when God *was* manifest in the flesh, so it could be said of all, in the same household, ages before them, they were "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "We," every one of them might have exclaimed with the self-abasing Apostle Paul, "have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us by God." And therefore—

V. The result of such heavenly faith is, not only complete success: "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee" (verse 22); but success accompanied by a gratitude as intense as imperturbable, and by a loving desire

<sup>1</sup> "My times" is an expression which has a special association with David. See 1 Chron. xxix. 30, "the times that went over him."

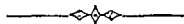
<sup>2</sup> "'Cliff' and 'rock' differ; the former expressing steepness, the other strength."—"Speaker's Commentary" on verse 3.

<sup>3</sup> This word should be carefully weighed. "A man's consideration means the full exercise of his mind; what must God's consideration be?"—C. H. Spurgeon.

that others may share in the rapturous zeal as well as in the confident importunity which has stimulated it. The believer who wrote this psalm (whoever he was) had an unruffled peace when he knew that his prayer was answered: "Oh, how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee. . . . Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man." He had, also, his lips filled with praise: "Blessed be the Lord, for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city." And, moreover, he was eager to confirm in all God's believing children the affectionate, energetic trustfulness which himself enjoyed: "O love the Lord, all ye His saints. . . . Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your hearts, all ye that hope in the Lord."

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### ART. III.—CHRIST'S WORK FOR HIS PEOPLE AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

HOW can we better enter on such a study than with the words of our Communion Service: *Sursum corda: Habemus ad Dominum.* "Lift up your hearts: We have them uplifted unto the Lord." We are about to consider some of the revealed mysteries of the present work of Christ Jesus, and our consideration shall, by His grace, be carried on in the light of a believing, adoring, loving view of His person, of Himself. He is Himself the heart and life of His blessed work, whether it be done on the Cross or on the Throne.

Let us first, as we approach the subject, fix our thoughts on the simple fact of our dear Lord's presence in the heavenly world as the Incarnate Son—a most definite presence begun by a most definite entrance. Two only of the Gospels narrate the Ascension; but St. John twice, characteristically, quotes words of our Lord which signify it. And the Book of the Acts both amplifies the brief Gospel record and repeatedly refers to the Ascension in reports of apostolic sermons. The Epistles, beginning with the Thessalonians, in a long and bright catena, do the same: "We wait for His Son from heaven;" "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven;" "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power;" "It is Christ that died . . . who is even at the right hand of God;" "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet;" "The Second Man is the Lord from heaven;" "The Father raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand