

to Tisri 711 B.C.—and parts of two others. A very interesting parallel to this meets us in Isa. xxxvii. 30, where we read: "And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof." This prophecy was uttered probably in the late summer of 701 B.C., shortly before the close of the civil year, and whilst Sennacherib's army was still in the land.¹ The second year spoken of commenced with the autumnal sowing time, which was close at hand, but which, owing to the terrible devastation of the land, the people would be unable to make use of. Not till another sowing time had come round—not till the beginning of a third year—would they be able to resume the round of agricultural labours, to sow, and reap, and plant vineyards. Thus taken, the prophet's words, though mentioning a second and third year, signify only a period of some fifteen or sixteen months.² In the same way it appears to me that the "three years" is to be understood in the passage now before us, so that the prophecy was literally fulfilled if Egyptian and Ethiopian captives were led away from Ashdod in the manner described any time after the first day of Tisri (September-October), 711 B.C. Now, as Ashdod did not fall until the early winter, or even later, according to the reasonings and calculations given above, this may very well have been the case so far as the question of time is concerned.

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(To be continued.)

ART. II.—THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE PSALMS.

IT has been truly said that "the history of the Psalter, if it could be written, would be a history of the spiritual life of the Church." No book in the long story of the world's literature has had so widespread a use or made so universal an appeal to the heart of man. It is a witness to the power of the subjective in religion in all lands and ages, not least, whatever critics may say, in our own. Mr. R. E. Prothero, fellow of All Souls, Oxford, has quickened in us this sense of

¹ The time of year of the destruction of Sennacherib's army is indicated by the words of Isa. xviii. 5: "Afore the harvest, when the blossom is over and the flower becometh a ripening grape."

² This is the view of the passage adopted by Cheyne and Birks. See Cheyne's "Prophecies of Isaiah," and Birks' "Commentary," *in loco*.

its universality by his intensely interesting book, combining all the interest of personal narrative with the sequence of an ordered historic treatise, upon "The Psalms in Human Life" (London: John Murray, 1904). But he would be the first to say that his book merely breaks the surface of a subject capable of almost infinite development. It would need not one but many volumes to tell us the influence of the Psalter on the souls of men. "The Psalms," writes the late Dean Church, comparing them to the ancient Vedas, "are as living as when they were written . . . they suit the needs, they express, as nothing else can express, the deepest religious ideas of the foremost in the files of time." "No single book of Scripture," writes the late Bishop Perowne, "not even of the New Testament, has perhaps ever taken such hold on the heart of Christendom. . . . The Psalter has been in the truest sense the prayer-book both of Jews and Christians."

This universality of acceptance springs from the universality of the ideas and images and affections which enrich this "Bible in miniature." There is not a phase of human experience which does not find expression there. Dean Stanley has emphasized the diversity, the joyousness, the spiritual life of the Psalms; Bishop Alexander their witness to Christianity and to Christian character. But it would be possible at once to name a whole group of equally universal features. They are not only a witness to Christ, they are a witness to the universality of human need and human desire after God. It is not only their joyousness, it is their wistfulness which belongs to the human heart as such. The Psalms are a mirror of the human soul in all its contrasts, its conflicts, its ideals, its experiences. The sense of the bitterness of life; the cry, "Who will show us any good?" the ghastly doubt concerning the kindness and faithfulness of the Most High; the note of pessimism and despair; the terrible cry of vengeance against a triumphant foe—all these are there, as well as the commendation of the righteous and their sure reward; the trust that calls upon the soul not to be cast down; the delight in the law of God as "perfect, converting the soul"; the sense of security within the covenant against the most tremendous odds; the yearning for "God, the living God," as the satisfaction of the heart. No sacred literature has ever produced a book so truly, so essentially human. In that very humanity lies its claim to be more than human. To all ages, to all lands, to all Churches, to all individuals, the Psalms make their appeal—Jew and Gentile, Romanist and Protestant, Cavalier and Puritan, Loyalist and Covenanter, Anglican and Nonconformist, monk and merchant, king and peasant, statesman, poet, and soldier.

Shakespeare, Dante, Tasso found their charm as great as Charles V., Columbus, Vladimir, Sidney, Raleigh, Bacon, and Ruskin. "Over their familiar words are written," says Mr. Prothero, "as it were in a palimpsest, the heart-stirring romances of spiritual chivalry, the most moving tragedies of human life and action."

One has only to recall the universality of their *images*. "All nature," writes Francis Newman, "is ransacked by the psalmists for metaphors to express this single thought, God is for my soul and my soul is for God. Father, Brother, Friend, King, Master, Shepherd, Guide, are common titles. God is their Tower, their Glory, their Rock, their Shield, their Sun, their Star, their Joy, their Portion, their Trust, their Life." Their figurative language is at once homely and diversified. The tree planted by the full watercourses (i.); the brittle vessel of the potter so easily dashed in pieces (ii.); the timid bird fleeing to her mountain (xi.); the shepherd leading his flocks through the deep, dismal ravine (xxiii.); the dove hiding among its rocky precipices from the wiles of men (lv.); the snail which melteth away in the eastern noontide heat and is gone, and the traveller's fire of thorns swept off by the whirlwind (lviii. 8, 9); the tottering wall and toppling fence as a fit picture of ruin (lxii. 4); the wax melting before the fire, like the perishing wicked before God's judgments (lxviii. 2); the dove's wings "covered with silver and her pinions with yellow gold"—picture of "God's turtle-dove" basking in the sunshine of His favour (lxviii. 13); the driven snow in Salmon (lxviii.); the wind which passeth away and cometh not again (lxxviii. 39); the mountain fires so easily kindled, yet so far reaching (lxxxiii. 14); the chaff whirled away before the lightest breeze (lxxxiii.); the swallow building her nest among the ruined altars of the Most High (lxxxiv.); the shadow "stretched out toward evening" (cii.); the huntsman's snares which death sets for his victims (cxxiv.); the patient sower under the dark winter skies weeping in the icy breeze (cxxvi.); the grass which withereth afore it groweth up (cxxix.); the child weaned *upon*, not apart from, its mother's breast (cxxxi.); the eagle ever young and lusty with renewed life (ciii.); the "lifting up" of the wings of the glorious dawn, the shroud of darkness which God can so easily pierce (cxxxix. 9); the woodcutter splitting and piling the logs before him (cxli. 7); the "thirsty land" of a soul without God (cxliii. 6)—what pictures can equal these for their adaptation to human experience?

But it is when we come to the *historic use* of the Psalms that we feel their unique power. The earliest glimpse of the Christian Church reveals them in active use. St. James and

St. Paul alike enjoined them. Ambrose remarks of his own day that though when other Scriptures are read the Church is full of noise and talking, yet "when the Psalter is read, all are dumb." Sidonius Apollinarius describes how the boatmen, toiling with bent backs to urge their barges against the stream, sing psalms. "Of other Scriptures," says Theodore of Mopsuetia, "most men know nothing. But the Psalms are repeated in private houses, in streets and market-places, by those who have learnt them by heart, and feel the soothing power of their Divine melodies." "The ploughman," writes Jerome from Palestine, "leaning on his plough-handle, sings in them his praises to God; the toiling reaper beguiles his work with psalms; the vine-dresser, as he prunes, raises one of the songs of David."

It is, however, the marvellous adaptation of the Psalms to the utterly contrasted conditions of individual spiritual life, in spite of the most tremendous differences of environment, standpoint, character, which chiefly impresses us with the fact that such a Book must have a more than human origin. "The proscribed Protestant reformer, the hunted Huguenot or Covenanter, the persecuted Cévénol, beheld himself in David fleeing to the mountain as a bird to the hills, betrayed by his own familiar friend, or plunged in the mire and clay of a prison from which death was the release" (Prothero). The references in this book to one text alone "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Ps. xxxi. 5)—words which our Lord Himself used upon His cross—show that the very same language of trust under the shadow of death breathed from the dying lips of men so diverse as the following: the first martyr Stephen; the saintly Basil; the strong, masterful Charlemagne; the princely and ill-used Becket; the fearless Huss and Jerome of Prague amid the flames; the worn-out Luther and Melancthon; Imperial Charles, their bitter foe; Tasso, Italy's wistful poet; Columbus, the intrepid discoverer of America; Bishop Fisher and Robert Southwell, most zealous of Romanists; Bishops Hooper and Ridley, most devoted martyrs of the Protestant faith; gentle Lady Jane Grey, with her clean past and her simple protestations of innocence which all accepted; unhappy Mary Queen of Scots, with her shadowed and guilty career; Thomas Cromwell, the upright statesman; John Knox, the impassioned reformer and national leader; George Herbert, quiet parish priest in little Bemerton under Salisbury's spire; Henry Martyn, intrepid missionary, ending his romantic career amid hostile moulvies as a stranger in a weary land.

It was with the words of a psalm that saintly King Louis of France braced himself for his coming kingship upon his

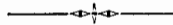
coronation day: "Unto Thee, O Lord, lift I up my soul: my God, I have put my trust in Thee" (Ps. xxv. 1). By the spirit of Ps. ci. Vladimir Monachus was instructed in his duties as Emperor of Russia by the patriarch Nicephorus. The wistfulness of Ps. lv. 6, "O for the wings of a dove," voiced the yearnings of Jerome at Aquileia towards the sacred solitude of Bethlehem, which we connect with the great Vulgate version of the Holy Scriptures. With the same words the unfortunate Darnley consoled the loneliness of those last terrible hours of darkness at Kirk o' Field while he awaited the awful plot of destruction which hurled him a few hours later into eternity. In the lips of John Wycliffe the note of triumph in Ps. cxviii. 17 became a challenge from what seemed his dying bed to the eager enemies that longed for his life: "I shall not die, but live . . . and declare the evil deeds of the friars." Those same words were inscribed upon the walls of Luther's study. "The Psalms," writes Mr. Prothero, "are the wings which lifted Thomas à Kempis out of his whitewashed cell, bore him above the flat fields of St. Agnes, and floated heavenwards those mystic musings of the 'Imitation' which thrilled with mingled awe and hope the heart of Maggie Tulliver." It was the singing of the first verse of Ps. cxxxvii. by St. Vincent de Paul when a slave—sold by the Barbary pirates who had captured him to an apostate Christian at Tunis—which softened the hearts of his owners and led to his release. In the Psalms Sir Thomas More, like many another, found consolation in the Beauchamp Tower, within the precincts of the Tower of London, as he awaited execution. Lord Burleigh, the wise statesman of Elizabeth, declared in his declining days that "there was no earthly thing in which he took comfort but in reading or hearing the Scriptures, Psalms, and prayers." With the words of Ps. xxxi. 1, "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion," Francis Xavier found comfort as he lay dying, fever-stricken, on the inhospitable coast of China, racked with bitter pain, far from friends and home. In Ps. cxlii. 1, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice," Francis d'Assisi found his last consolation. To Savonarola, the monk of Florence, the Psalms had been the joy of early youth; and they were the inner voices of God which braced him for that last tremendous hour when, before assembled Florence, he was first degraded from his priesthood, and then dragged to a cruel martyrdom after the nameless cruelties which had gone before. Ps. cxliii. 8 were his special words of consolation on that terrible, yet glorious, morning when they "severed him from the Church militant," only to "unite him to the Church triumphant." When Ridley, before

his last night on earth, refused the proffered company of his brother, it was in the promise of a psalm that he couched his refusal: "He meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as he ever did in his life. 'I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest.'" The great battle-hymns of Luther are taken from the Psalms. To William Wallace the Psalter was so dear a consolation that he pleaded that it might be held before him during his execution, and in those last moments never took his eyes off it. Ps. lxxviii. cheered the soldiers of Cromwell at the Battle of Dunbar. Ps. xli. fortified the defenders in the siege of Derry, when food, ammunition, strength, numbers, all alike fell short. The passage in Ps. lxxix. 11, "O let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before Thee," was the inspiration of the life-work in prison reform of the noble John Howard. "In Jewry is God known" (lxxvi.) was the favourite Psalm of Charles Kingsley. Ps. cxix. 96, "I see that all things come to an end, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad," was the equally characteristic favourite verse of Dean Stanley. William Wilberforce so loved the Psalms that he used to read them as he walked in Hyde Park, and marvelled at their unique freshness and beauty. Thomas Arnold, the great Rugby headmaster, found their words of prayer his consolation in the agonies of angina pectoris.

These are but a few of the incidents given in Mr. Prothero's book in much greater prodigality and variety. But these, again, are being multiplied every day in the actual experience of life. What concerns us here is the lesson which underlies this fact of universality. It is, in truth, a convincing testimony to the reality and character of Biblical inspiration. What does it matter to us if we find that a powerful and searching historical criticism modifies our views of the dates and even the authorship of our favourite Psalms, or a more extended knowledge of the ancient manuscripts and versions re-translates their text so that we can no longer rely on them for the familiar proofs we used to seek there, so long as no other Book in the world, no other poetry among the nations, has ever given anything approaching to such universal and continuous correspondence with the needs of the heart of man? This unique humanity of the Psalms—from what source alone can it be derived? Our faith in Holy Scripture at the present day does not rest, so much as that of our forefathers', upon the fulfilment of its prophecies and types, however real to ourselves that fulfilment may be. Our habits of thought lead us in rather a different direction. It is not the separateness of the Bible from humanity that appeals to us and wins us, but rather the breadth and fulness and universality of that

humanity. It is the same fact which so impresses us to-day with the Incarnate Life of God in the witness which It bears to Itself amongst men. Its unique claim to Divinity rests upon the breadth and fulness of its Humanity. The Transcendence lies in the perfection of the Immanence, in the universality of each. No *merely* human thing could be in either case so broadly, so sympathetically human, so free from all partial aspects of humanity, from all prejudice or passing influence such as clouds or warps or straitens sympathy with man as man. And the desire for God, the yearning after the abiding and the satisfying, the striving for a more complete self-realization, the longing for fulfilment, the sense of present incompleteness, the consciousness of hindrances to communion brought about through sin—these are there also. The Psalter is interpenetrated with the passion to find God more fully. Perhaps its wistfulness is even its greatest feature. But always the tones are human. Like that other Voice which spoke amongst the smiling hill-slopes and shining waters of Galilee, whereof it is written that whilst It “spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes,” yet also “the common people heard It gladly.”

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ART. III.—STUDIES ON ISAIAH.

CHAPS. XI., XII.

IT will be convenient at the present stage to bring together the various conceptions of the Messiah and His work contained in the foregoing chapters, and to compare them with other prophecies and with their fulfilment in the New Testament. Thus we shall be able to see more clearly that the teaching of Holy Scripture forms an organic whole, and that its claim to interpret to us the mind of God, and to connect the expression of that mind in “God’s Word written” with man’s whole history, is better founded than modern interpreters would have us believe. We shall see that from the very first God’s dealings with us have proceeded upon a defined plan—a plan which has been gradually unfolded, and that by processes of which there is no evidence elsewhere in history. I do not use the word “supernatural” in relation to these processes, because that word, as well as the word