

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

they engendered sapped his vitality and poisoned the fountains of his life ; from the days of his boyhood, he had, as it were, lost something, and he not only knew that he had lost it, but he was hopeless of ever recovering it. Out of the shadow of that despair his soul was never lifted.

“ ‘ Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend !’ I shrieked, upstarting—
 ‘ Get thee back into the tempest, and the Night’s Plutonian shore !
 Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken !
 Leave my loneliness unbroken !—quit the bust above my door !
 Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door !’
 Quoth the Raven, ‘ Nevermore.’

“ And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
 On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door ;
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
 And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor ;
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted—nevermore !”



Psalm xci.

BY THE REV. SYDNEY THELWALL, B.A.

“ IT is stated by Kimchi,” says the late Rev. George Phillips (sometime President of Queens’ College, Cambridge), in his very useful edition of the Psalms in Hebrew, with a commentary, published in 1846, “that the older Rabbis affirmed that Moses composed all those Poems, eleven in number, in which there is not mentioned the name of the poet.” (Why should Kimchi give the number as eleven? The right number would seem to be thirty-four.) Whatever be the grounds which support that opinion, it will be the object of this paper to show, by internal evidence, how pre-eminently appropriate Ps. xci. is to a certain character, under certain circumstances. And, if this position be established, Rabbinic tradition, in this case at all events, will seem to be correct.

Ps. xc., with which the fourth book of the Psalms begins, is entitled “A Prayer of Moses the man of God.” It is interesting

to observe, at the outset, in what a large preponderance of instances the word here rendered "prayer" is used in connection with royal and priestly persons; and Moses "was king in Jeshurun" (Deut. xxxiii. 5), and had also acted as priest (see Lev. viii., and *cf.* Ps. xcix. 6). An examination of the Psalm will show how exactly it suits the supposition that Moses did write it, as at once a Dirge and an Encouragement: a Dirge over the "600,000 on foot that were men, beside women," whose unbelief shut them out from "the Promised Land" (however many of them learnt, in their wanderings, faith in the Promised Seed), and "whose carcasses fell in the desert"; an Encouragement to those who, under Joshua, were shortly to enter that Land. Let us look at it. And let it be premised that whoever is unacquainted with Boys's applications of the principles of Scriptural structure to the Psalms lacks one of the most valuable of all helps to their study. Three leading topics appear in vers. 1 to 3: (1) Divine Stability, vers. 1, 2; (2) Human Instability, ver. 3, first half; (3) Human Recovery, ver. 3, second half. These are then taken up again, in the same order, and the second and third are enlarged upon in the rest of the Psalm: (1) Divine Stability, ver. 4; (2) Human Instability, with its sinful causes, vers. 5 to 11; (3) Human Recovery, with its Covenantal causes, vers. 12 to 17. This, be it noted, is the one portion of the Psalm in which the Covenantal Name, LORD, is found; and in this portion it is found twice. Divine stability, then, not only forms the striking contrast with human instability, but also constitutes the basis of human hope. And, while human guilt brings its own punishment, "the wages of sin is death," it is Divine Grace which brings human recovery, and, with recovery, establishment: "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Thus, Ps. xc. proves to be, as was stated above, not only a mournful dirge, but an animating encouragement too. Divine stability is seen in justice. But it is seen in grace also. The forty years are looked back upon, and bring their lesson. But the future is looked forward to, and inspires confidence.

Yet, if the Psalm were written, as these considerations suggest, just as the forty years were ending, there was still one great loss about to betide. Moses himself was on the point of being taken away. A new leader was to take his place. What did the loss of Moses mean to Israel as a People? What did it mean to that devoted henchman of his, Joshua, on whom the leadership was to devolve? If there was one man in Israel whose heart would most deeply feel the blow, was it not Joshua? If there was one man in Israel who more than any other needed cheering, was it not Joshua? Accordingly, we find the Great Captain of Salvation, always "able to sympathize," taking special thought for this case, and enjoining Moses to "charge," and "encourage," and "strengthen" Joshua (see Num. xxvii. 18-23; and Deut. i. 38, and iii. 28). This Moses does, as not only the passage in Numbers shows, but also such passages as Deut. xxxi. 7, 8, and 23. And the Lord Himself does it (as we learn from Deut. xxxi. 14 and 15), before Moses' death, and (as Josh. i. 1-9 shows us) after it. From that first chapter of Joshua we learn further that some of Joshua's own troops addressed words of encouragement to him (see Josh. i. 18, last clause).

Now take up Ps. xci., and consider whether we have not here words in which "the Holy Ghost, the Comforter," Himself taught Moses to "charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him." Let us carefully observe, as we read it, the *changes of person*; and we shall, as Boys once remarks, find, not "a marvellous *confusion*," but a marvellous *regularity*—a key to the entire arrangement.

Ver. 1. (The LORD speaks :)

A dweller in the Most High's close
Will be lodging in an Almighty One's shade.
(He needs have no fear, then.)

Ver. 2. (Moses speaks [for himself] :)

I shall say (*Or*, Let me say) to the LORD,
'My Shelter, and my Stronghold! my God!
I shall confide (*Or*, Let me confide) in Him.
(And this when just about to die.)

- Ver. 3. (Moses speaks [to Joshua] :)
 For He it is who will rescue thee from fowler's
 trap, from wasting pest.
- Ver. 4. In His plumage will He make thee a covert, and
 'neath His wings wilt thou repose :
 Shield and targe will be His truth.
- Ver. 5. Thou wilt not fear for night's alarm :
 For shaft [that] will fly by day :
- Ver. 6. For pest [that] in the dark will stalk :
 For ravage [that] will devastate at noon.
- Ver. 7. Fall there at thy side a thousand,
 And ten thousand (*or*, a myriad) at thy right hand :
 (*i.e.*, the *unshielded* side) :
 Unto thee it will not come nigh.
- Ver. 8. Only, with thine eyes thou wilt look on ;
 And caitiffs' guerdon wilt see.
- Ver. 9. (Moses continues [to Joshua] :)
 Because thou [like me] hast made the LORD, my
 own Shelter,
 [Even] the Most High, thy Refuge :
- Ver. 10. No ill hap will be sent thee (*i.e.*, no *accidental* ill
 will befall thee) ;
 Nor will a blow come close in thy tent (*i.e.*, *treachery*
 will not get at thee).
- Ver. 11. For to His angels will He give orders for thee,
 To keep thee in all thy ways.
- Ver. 12. Upon both hands will they upbear thee :
 Lest thou trip thy foot at the stone.¹
- Ver. 13. Upon old lion and asp thou wilt tread :
 Will trample young lion and dragon.
- Ver. 14. (The LORD speaks :)
 Because he hath set his heart on Me, I shall
 deliver him :
 I shall set him aloft, because he knoweth My Name.

¹ "The stone": the Hebrew appears pointed as with the article. Some stone, it seems, to be purposely put in his way. The Greek has no article here; nor does it appear when the text is given in the Greek Testament; see Matt. iv. 6 and Luke iv. 11.

Ver. 15. Let him invoke Me, I shall answer him ;
 With him Myself [shall be] in trouble :
 I shall secure him,
 And shall honour him.

Ver. 16. With length of days shall I satisfy him :
 And shall give him insight into My salvation.

Here, then, we have a perfect composition. The "skeleton," arranged after Boys's style, is this ;

{	A :	ver. 1.	The LORD speaks, assertively :
{	B {	ver. 2.	Moses speaks, expressing his own faith (a).
{	B {	vers. 3 to 8.	Moses speaks, to Joshua, encouragingly (b).
{	B {	ver. 9.	Moses speaks, expressing Joshua's faith (a).
{	B {	vers. 10 to 13.	Moses speaks, to Joshua, encouragingly (b).
{	A :	vers. 14 to 16.	The LORD speaks, promisingly.

It may further be noted, in comparing the related passages *b* (vers. 3 to 8) and *b* (vers. 10 to 13), that in the first and last portions of them (vers. 3 and 4, and vers. 11 to 13) we have a *positive* feature, while in the two other portions (vers. 5 to 8, and ver. 10) we have a *negative*.

Looked at thus, read in this light, how admirably appropriate to Joshua's case does the Psalm appear. And how aptly does each member of it fall into its own place. The sublime Divine utterances at the beginning and end ; the serene faith of Moses (reminding one of Job's ever-famous " Though He slay me, yet shall I trust¹ Him ") with Pisgah, and what was to take place there, before him ; his clear view of the dangers to which war and its consequences would expose Joshua, and his certainty that Joshua would be borne safe through them ; his solemn identifying of Joshua's faith and hope with his own ; and his triumphant anticipations not only of immunity, but also of consummate success for him : all this gives us a glimpse of the power of the Inspiring Spirit, and of the exactitude with which He times and shapes His promptings to the characters as well

¹ Note the word : a word used of trusting *in spite of difficulty and discouragement*.

as the circumstances of the "chosen vessels" through whom, and for whose benefit, He speaks.

At the same time, the devout soul will love to realize that "a greater than Joshua is here"; and to trace in the stately staves of this uplifting melody the steps of that march from conquest to conquest which the Captain of Salvation trod "in the days of His flesh." Such a soul, too, will delight to see, withal, the application of the Psalm to the experiences of the whole "Mystical Body"; and to those, also, of the several members of that Body as they "fight the good fight," "accomplish their course," and "keep the faith." To such souls the present writer, in winding up this paper, would commend Newton's two hymns on this Psalm: the one beginning "That man no guard or weapons needs": the other beginning "Incarnate God! the soul that knows." To have enriched Christ's Church with only those two hymns is something for which a man might well thank the Giver of "every perfect gift."



Pre-Mosaic Literature and the Bible.

BY THE REV. W. T. PILTER.

LESS than two generations ago the statement implied in the title of this paper would have been universally regarded with incredulity or even derision; no one who is in the least conversant with the discoveries which have been made in the archæology of the Nearer East since then will so regard it now. Sceptics and sceptically-minded critics may disbelieve the Bible and deny that the Moses of the Pentateuch is more than a legendary name, but they know better, most of them, than to deny the existence of considerable literature of a date earlier than that which Scripture history tells us was the period of Moses.

In this and a subsequent article I propose to describe briefly the extent and character of the literary remains of pre-Mosaic