

The Psalm of the Crucifixion.

BY LIEUT.-COL. W. H. TURTON, D.S.O.

IT is proposed in this paper to consider what is called the Messianic interpretation of Psalm xxii. The subject is, of course, an old one, having been discussed from the time of Justin Martyr onwards; but still (so far as I am aware) the points of agreement do not seem to have been all brought together before in a plain and simple manner. What we shall do, then, is to take the Psalm as it stands, verse by verse, in the Revised Version, and see how remarkably it agrees with the events at the close of Christ's life.

1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

To begin with, the *Sufferer*, as we may call the subject of this Psalm, shortly before he died (ver. 15), felt forsaken by God. And not only was this the case with Christ when He was crucified, but He used these actual words—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when doing so, we are told, He *cried with a loud voice*,¹ which is a very similar expression to *roaring*.

2. *O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou answerest not; And in the night season, and am not silent.*

But for a time God seemed to abandon him. The words *in the night season* must evidently refer to the *previous* night, as it was now daytime (ver. 7), and the Sufferer died soon afterwards. And they are thus very applicable to Christ's praying during the previous night in Gethsemane.

3. *But thou art holy,*

O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

And yet the Sufferer, in spite of his troubles, casts no reproach upon God; whoever else was to blame, it was not

¹ Matt. xxvii. 46.

God's fault. While the reference to the *praises of Israel* shows that he belonged to God's chosen people, the Jews ; which also, of course, agrees with the case of Christ.

4. *Our fathers trusted in thee ;*

They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

This also shows that the Sufferer was a Jew, by his speaking of *our fathers*. And though the expression, if it stood alone, would imply that he was speaking in the name of others as well as himself, this cannot be its meaning here. For in the rest of the Psalm the words *I*, *my*, and *me* are used over and over again, and in such a way as to make it clear that they refer to a single person.

5. *They cried unto thee, and were delivered ;*

They trusted in thee, and were not ashamed.

And the Jews had often been helped by God before, which seems contrasted with His apparent indifference in the present case. For it is plain that the Sufferer, like his fathers, trusted in God, only he was *not* delivered.

6. *But I am a worm, and no man ;*

A reproach of men, and despised of the people.

And now the Sufferer describes his pitiable condition. The term *worm* suggests something that was thought utterly weak and helpless ; and in this state he was subjected to the reproach of men, and despised by the people.

And how well it agrees with the case of Christ must be obvious to all. For when He was crucified, He was in the most weak and helpless condition possible ; and in this state He was both *reproached* by the chief priests and others, for His supposed claim to destroy the temple ; and *despised* by the common people, who had just chosen a murderer instead.

7. *All they that see me laugh me to scorn ;*

They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

Moreover, he was lifted up to die in public, so that those who passed by could see him ; and they mocked him, shaking their heads, etc. All of which implies that it was a lingering death like *crucifixion*, where the person is exposed for hours to

the ridicule of his enemies ; and would not be suitable for other kinds of death, such as stoning or beheading.

And the words "they laugh me *to scorn*" imply that the Sufferer had made some claims or pretensions which had (apparently) been proved to be untrue. Such an expression could scarcely be used of an ordinary criminal, who had never made any claims at all ; but would be most suitable for a false prophet, or a pretended Messiah.

And again every detail exactly agrees with the case of Christ. He was crucified near a public road, so that those who passed by could see Him ; He had made tremendous claims ; He was laughed to scorn by the people for the apparent failure of these claims ; and the way they did this was by shaking their heads at Him, and saying, etc.¹

8. *Commit thyself unto the Lord ; let him deliver him :*

Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.

Or as it is in the margin,

He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him :

Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.

And here we have the actual words they used. The second reading seems preferable, since inserting *thyself*, which does not occur in the Hebrew, introduces needless confusion into the verse. For if it begins "Commit *thyself* unto the Lord," it ought to continue "let Him deliver *thee*."

And the last clause can, of course, only be meant ironically, in the sense that the Sufferer *claimed* that God delighted in him—claimed, that is, in some special sense to be beloved by God. And it was apparently because of this claim that the people *laughed him to scorn*.

And then as to the fulfilment. The words used by the chief priests when mocking Christ on the Cross are thus given by St. Matthew : *He trusteth on God ; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him ; for he said, I am the Son of God.*² The agreement is practically complete ; and yet it is difficult to deny its fulfilment, as a more probable incident under the circumstances can scarcely be imagined. Christ, it will be remembered, had

¹ John xix. 20 ; Mark xv. 29.

² Matt. xxvii. 43.

just claimed, at His trial, to be the Son of God, and the chief priests, knowing this, naturally quoted the familiar, and, as they thought, most appropriate, language (just as men sometimes quote the Bible now), without thinking of its real significance.

Moreover, supposing the words were never uttered, is it conceivable that the Evangelist, or anyone else, would have invented them, merely to get a pretended fulfilment of this Psalm ; and yet have never pointed out the agreement himself, but have trusted to the chance of his readers discovering it ?

It should also be noticed that the reference to the *Lord* (Jehovah) shows that the speakers themselves were Jews. And as they were the ordinary passers-by (*all they that see me*), it follows that the Sufferer was put to death among his own nation ; which also agrees with the case of Christ.

9. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb ;*

Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother's breasts.

And now the Sufferer implies that the taunt of his enemies, as to God's delighting in him, was really true. The opening words cannot, of course, be pressed literally ; but they certainly show that the Sufferer was in some very special sense beloved by God, and that God had (if we may so express it) taken an interest in him when he was still in the womb. This is the natural meaning of the words, just as to go and release a man from prison would imply taking an interest in him when he was still in prison. While the second clause, though perhaps of general significance, is anyhow very appropriate to some signal act of deliverance, which God had vouchsafed to him when he was quite young.

And again, it is needless to point out how entirely all this agrees with the case of Christ. He was in a very special sense beloved by God ; God had taken an interest in Him when He was still in the womb, sending an angel to announce His name and work ;¹ and God had saved Him in His infancy from being slain by Herod. This last was a signal act of deliverance, that might well make Him *trust* in God from His earliest years.

¹ Matt. i. 21 ; cf. Isa. xlix. 1, 5.

10. *I was cast upon thee from the womb :*

Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

This again implies that God had watched over him from his infancy, and that the Sufferer in return had dedicated his whole life to God ; so that he could say that God had been *his* God, even from his birth. It, of course, exactly agrees with the case of Christ.

11. *Be not far from me ; for trouble is near ;*

For there is none to help.

This also agrees with Christ's having been forsaken by all His disciples just before His Crucifixion ; so that when trouble was near, there was none to help.

12. *Many bulls have compassed me :*

Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

But though the Sufferer was abandoned by his friends, he was surrounded by his enemies, described as *bulls of Bashan*. This curious term is used elsewhere for the unjust rulers of the people, the *mighty*, the *princes*, those *which oppress the poor*, etc.¹ And as it is never used for anyone else, we must give it this meaning here. It is therefore very appropriate to the chief priests and rulers, who had so unjustly procured Christ's condemnation, and who now stood round the Cross reviling Him.² Of course there were many others with them, but this is also implied in the verse.

The custom of thus speaking of men as if they were animals, which seems to us so extraordinary, was thoroughly Eastern, and occurs repeatedly in the Bible. And it does not cause as much confusion as we might have expected, since the meaning of the words can generally be ascertained from other passages.

13. *They gape upon me with their mouth,*

As a ravening and a roaring lion.

This verse again implies that the Sufferer was exposed to die in the presence of his enemies, who stood round mocking him, *gaping with the mouth* being a common expression of

¹ Ezek. xxxix. 18 ; Amos iv. 1.

² Matt. xxvii. 41 ; Luke xxiii. 35.

contempt.¹ It is therefore specially suitable for a death by *crucifixion*. And it exactly agrees with the case of Christ, whose enemies did, as a matter of fact, stand round the Cross mocking Him.

While as to the other details, *ravening* was appropriate to the way in which the chief priests and people had thirsted for His blood, when they kept demanding His death from Pilate, and *roaring* to the great noise and tumult they made when doing so.²

14. *I am poured out like water.*

And all my bones are out of joint :

My heart is like wax ;

It is melted in the midst of my bowels.

Three points have to be noticed here. First, the Sufferer was "poured out like water," which, though a curious expression, quite suits the case of Christ, whose side was pierced, so that there poured out a quantity of watery fluid mixed with clots of blood. And this is the more remarkable, as it was not a usual accompaniment of crucifixion ; and it evidently made a great impression on the Evangelist who saw it. The agreement, however, would (probably) have been more exact if this detail had been placed just after, instead of just before the death.

Secondly, the Sufferer's bones were out of joint. And this, on the other hand, might easily occur in *crucifixion*, through the weight of the suspended body (in spite of its having some kind of support), but would be most unlikely in other forms of death.

Lastly, there is the puzzling reference to the heart. But it has been recently shown by doctors that the immediate cause of Christ's death was probably rupture of the heart, due to excessive strain ; and this provides an unexpected fulfilment.³

And here, as in other cases, the applicability of the verse to Christ is rendered all the more striking by its being so hopelessly inapplicable to anyone else. David, for instance (as far

¹ *E.g.*, Job xvi. 10 ; Lam. ii. 16.

² Matt. xxvii. 23, 24.

³ See "The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ," by Dr. Symes Thompson. 1904.

as we know), was never in any sense poured out like water, nor was he ever in any position likely to put his bones out of joint, and still less did he rupture his heart.

15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd ;
And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*

And now we come to his final sufferings. His *strength being dried up* was evidently a sign of extreme *weakness*. This would have been quite natural in the closing stages of *crucifixion*, but would scarcely have occurred in other forms of capital punishment, such as beheading, hanging, drowning, or stoning. And it must have been specially true in the case of Christ, considering all He had gone through the previous night, without, apparently, either food or rest.

And the *tongue cleaving to the jaws* was evidently (from the way in which the term is used elsewhere¹) a sign of extreme *thirst*. This is another well-known accompaniment of *crucifixion*, though not of other kinds of death. And how well it agrees with the case of Christ scarcely needs pointing out, for of all His sufferings it was the only one that drew from Him a single word. And, in exact agreement with the Psalm, this occurred immediately before His death.²

The Sufferer's *death*, it will be noticed, is not ascribed, like the rest of his sufferings, to any human agent, but directly to God, as if to show that it had some special significance.³ The only other instance in the whole Psalm in which such language is used refers to his *birth* (ver. 9, "*Thou art he,*" etc.), and it is certainly curious that both the birth and death should be thus ascribed to God. The Sufferer seems to have felt that his whole life was one of supreme interest in the sight of God.

16. *For dogs have compassed me ;
The assembly of evil-doers have inclosed me ;
They pierced my hands and my feet.*

Having now described his various sufferings up to the moment of death, the cause of this (which had only been hinted at before) is here definitely stated. He was brought into the

¹ Lam. iv. 4.

² John xix. 28-30.

³ Cf. Isa. liiii. 10.

dust of death, *for* (or *because*) the evil-doers had pierced his hands and feet. His death was thus due to *crucifixion*. And this is the more remarkable, as it was not a *Jewish* punishment, though dead bodies were sometimes hung on trees.¹

And yet, as we have seen, verse 8 clearly shows that the Sufferer was put to death among his own countrymen. This strange anomaly of a Jew being put to death among Jews, and yet not in the Jewish manner by stoning, but by crucifixion, exactly suits the time of Christ, when Judæa was a Roman province, and crucifixion a Roman punishment.

It must also be noted that the men who crucified Him—the assembly of evil-doers—are here called *dogs*. They were apparently a distinct set of men, and different from the Jews, who had before been mocking Him. And, curiously enough, this was the very term used by Christ Himself for the *Gentiles*, in distinction to the Jews, since, in reply to a Gentile woman, He said He was only sent to the House of Israel; and that it was not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to *dogs*.² The term was thus peculiarly appropriate to the Gentile (Roman) soldiers who crucified Him.

17. *I may tell all my bones ;*

They look and stare upon me.

They also exposed and stretched out his body, so that the bones (ankles, knees, elbows, etc.) stood out in relief, and could thus be counted. And once more it is *crucifixion*, rather than any other kind of death, for which the words seem appropriate.

And then they stayed to watch him, which also implies that it was a lingering death like *crucifixion*, and that the executioners remained as a sort of guard. Such language would be quite unsuitable for the death of St. John the Baptist, or of St. James, or of many other martyrs.

This is, indeed, the *eighth* detail, in these *five* verses, which suits crucifixion rather than other kinds of death. While, as we have seen, they contain two others (being poured out like water, and rupturing the heart), which, though they do not as a

¹ Deut. xxi. 22.

² Matt. xv. 26.

rule occur in crucifixion, yet did so in the case of Christ. Anything more precise than all this can scarcely be desired.

18. *They part my garments among them,
And upon my vesture do they cast lots.*

The men who crucified him also divided his garments among them, casting lots for one of them. And this, though only a trifle, is interesting for several reasons. In the first place, it was *not* (as far as we know) the custom among the Jews for the executioners of anyone to divide his clothes among them, and no instance of it occurs in the Old Testament. On the other hand, it *was* the custom among the Romans; the clothes of a prisoner being often taken as the perquisites of the guards who executed him. This difference was probably due to the fact that the Jews did not strip a prisoner before execution, while the Romans (at all events in the case of crucifixion) generally did. It thus forms another point in which the Psalm suits *crucifixion* rather than other kinds of death.

And then as to the method of dividing the clothes. The expressions used in the Psalm, like many of the parallel clauses in Hebrew poetry, are not mere repetitions. They indicate two distinct, though somewhat similar acts—parting the *garments* (plural) and casting lots for the *vesture* (singular). And not only does St. John say that all this actually occurred in the case of Christ,¹ but it is extremely probable that it should have done so. For Edersheim has shown that the usual dress of the Jews at the time consisted of four articles of about equal value (the turban, cloak, girdle, and sandals), and one (the inner coat or tunic) of greater value.² And therefore that the four soldiers, who were usually employed for such work, should each take one of the less valuable articles, and then cast lots for the more valuable one, is exactly what we should expect.

These last few details, it will be noticed, *and these only* (piercing the hands and feet, exposing the body so that the bones stood out, keeping watch over the Sufferer, dividing his

¹ John xix. 23, 24.

² Edersheim, "Life and Times of the Messiah," vol. ii, p. 590. 1883.

clothes among them, and casting lots for one of them), are ascribed to the *dogs*, or *assembly of evil-doers* of verse 16. It is implied (as said before) that they were a distinct set of men, apparently Gentiles, and different from the passers-by and mockers of verses 6-8, who were evidently Jews. And as a matter of fact, these were the very things that were done by the Gentile soldiers who crucified Christ. So here is another complete series of agreements.

19. *But be not thou far off, O Lord ;*

O thou my succour, haste thee to help me.

Then follows a short prayer. It is, however, only a prayer for *deliverance*, and not in any sense for forgiveness, still less for vengeance on his enemies. Indeed, all through the Psalm the Sufferer never hints that he has any need of forgiveness. He appears to have no consciousness of *sin*, and never laments his own wickedness, as the Psalmists so frequently do when writing about themselves. Nor, in spite of the cruel way in which he has been treated, does he ever show the slightest resentment against his enemies.

And once more it is needless to point out how entirely this agrees with the case of Christ. For His unconsciousness of sin was (as is well known) one of the most striking features in His character ; and He never showed the slightest resentment against His enemies.

20. *Deliver my soul from the sword ;*

My darling from the power of the dog.

The term *sword*, as it occurs in connection with the *dog*, the *lion's mouth*, and the *wild oxen* (ver. 21), need not be pressed literally, but may be used here, as in other cases, for any violent death. Thus, we are told that Uriah was shot at and killed by arrows, which is afterwards described as his being slain by the *sword*.¹ And in the New Testament the term seems used for all punishments inflicted by the Roman authorities, as we are told that the magistrate *beareth not the sword in vain ; and they that take the sword shall perish with the sword*, this latter very likely referring to a death by crucifixion (St. Peter's).²

¹ 2 Sam. xi. 24, xii. 9.

² Rom. xiii 4 ; Matt. xxvi. 52.

With regard to the expression *my darling*, or *my only one* (margin), the sense seems to require that it should be *thy* darling, as the Sufferer is speaking of himself all through. This was evidently the view taken by Justin Martyr;¹ and it would make it agree with the earlier part of the Psalm (ver. 9); but there is, unfortunately, no authority for changing *my* to *thy*.

21. *Save me from the lion's mouth ;*

Yea, from the horns of the wild oxen thou hast answered me.

The sense is made clearer by putting a full-stop after oxen. And the last words, *Thou hast answered me*, are very remarkable, since to all appearances the Sufferer's prayer had *not* been answered, and he had been allowed to die. In Christ alone we have the explanation ; for His death was not the end of His work : it was followed by His Resurrection, when He was completely delivered from all His enemies. This finishes what we may call the first part of the Psalm.

22. *I will declare thy name unto my brethren ;*

In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

And now the strain suddenly changes ; and the Sufferer, in spite of his having been brought into the dust of death, is somehow restored to life and freedom. This implies his Resurrection ; and he now declares God's name unto his brethren. And yet, as they were Jews, they must have known God's name before, so it probably means telling them something further about it ; which shows that the Sufferer was in some sense a religious teacher.

But though everything else in the Psalm changes at this verse, its application to Christ still remains. He was essentially a religious Teacher ; His Death was followed by His Resurrection ; this was followed by His declaring for the first time what was God's complete *Name*, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; and this declaration was made unto those whom He now for the first time (in this definite manner) calls His *brethren*, the Apostles. While if we identify this appearance with that to the five hundred (as is commonly done), it was literally *in the midst*

¹ Dial. 105.

of the congregation—in the presence, that is, of the first large Christian assembly.¹

After this we come to the results which follow from the Sufferer's deliverance ; for the event, as we shall see, is of world-wide significance, and has the most far-reaching effects. And, once more, how suitable this is to the case of Christ, and how unsuitable to that of anyone else, scarcely needs pointing out.

23. *Ye that fear the Lord, praise him ;
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him ;
And stand in awe of him, all ye the seed of Israel.*

At first, however, the results are limited to the Jews. The people were to *praise* and *glorify* God ; though, mingled with their rejoicings, there was to be a strange feeling of *awe* and dread. This is not what we should have expected, but it was exactly fulfilled. For Christianity was first preached among the Jews ; and two of its immediate effects were that the people *praised* God, and *fear* came upon every soul.²

24. *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted ;
Neither hath he hid his face from him ;
But when he cried unto him, he heard.*

The rejoicings, moreover, are all due to God's not having *despised* (but having accepted) the sufferings of the Sufferer. The verse is not very clear, but this seems its most probable meaning. For two acts are indicated. God did not despise his sufferings, neither did He refuse to hear his prayer. The latter is, of course, quite plain, and is merely an echo of the previous *Thou hast answered me* ; but what about the former ?

In common language, to *despise* anything (e.g., a child's present to his father) means either to refuse it, or to accept it and treat it as worthless. While *not* to despise it, means to accept it, and value it, if not for its own sake, at least for the sake of him who offered it. In the same way, to *abhor* anything means to regard it with disfavour ; while *not* to abhor it, means to regard it with favour.

And it is difficult to see how such language can be used of

¹ Matt. xxviii. 10, 19 ; John xvii. 26.

² Acts ii. 43-47.

God's attitude towards the sufferings, unless they were in some way offered to Him for His acceptance ; and (not despised) but favourably regarded by Him. And this, of course, introduces the Christian doctrine of the *Atonement*.

25. *Of thee cometh my praise in the great congregation ;
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*

This is the only verse in the whole Psalm which does not seem to be applicable to Christ, since (as far as we know) He never made any vows at all. Perhaps the best explanation is that it was the custom among the Jews, when in trouble, to vow that, if delivered, they would offer a sacrifice to the Lord as a thanksgiving, which was afterwards bestowed as a feast on the poor. And since the next verse refers to some feast of which the *meek* (or *poor*) are to eat, this is doubtless its meaning here. The expression *I will pay my vows* would then mean, I will (in accordance with the well-known Jewish custom) commemorate my deliverance by preparing a thanksgiving feast for the poor ; though the following verses show that it cannot be a literal one.

26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied ;
They shall praise the Lord that seek after him ;
Let your heart live for ever.*

Here is the first reference to the feast, just alluded to, of which the meek (or poor) are now to eat. And they are to be *satisfied* ; because apparently (unlike an ordinary meal, which only enables anyone to live for a short time) this is in some strange way connected with their living *for ever*.

It is hence often thought to refer to the *Holy Communion*, and the language seems suitable throughout. For the Holy Communion is also a thanksgiving feast to commemorate a great deliverance ; it was also at first for the *meek*, as all the earliest converts were in a humble state of life ; it has always been considered, in a very special sense, a service of *praise* ; and (probably referring to this service) Christ used the same remarkable expression " He that eateth this bread shall *live for ever*."¹

¹ John vi. 58.

27. *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord:*

And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

And the blessings then extend to the Gentile nations also, even to the most distant parts of the world, who are now to become worshippers of the true God, Jehovah. And though this is perhaps the strangest part of the whole prophecy, considering when it was written, its fulfilment is obvious to everyone. Christians exist in all countries, and wherever there are Christians, Jehovah is worshipped.

This *conversion of the Gentiles*, it will be noticed, forms the grand climax of the Psalm. And it both shows its Messianic character, since the other Jewish prophets always associate it with the times of the Messiah; and excludes other interpretations, since the deliverance of Old Testament saints (David, etc.) never led to the conversion of the Gentiles. In this, as in so many other respects, the Psalm is applicable to Christ, *and to Him alone*. Moreover, Christ's command to convert the Gentiles was not given till *after* His Resurrection, and was evidently in some way dependent on it—which agrees with the position the verse occupies in this Psalm.

With regard to the closing words, little stress can be laid on their being *before thee*, instead of (as we should have expected) *before him*. But they certainly *seem* to show that some other Person is to be worshipped besides Jehovah; and if so, this can only be the Sufferer himself. And we must then regard these two verses (27, 28) as a sort of response made by the people, in reply to the Sufferer's greeting in verse 26. But this (though it admirably suits the Christian interpretation by showing the divinity of the Sufferer) scarcely seems satisfactory; and it is perhaps better to keep to the Prayer Book version, which has *before him*.

28. *For the kingdom is the Lord's:*

And he is the ruler over the nations.

The universal sovereignty of Jehovah is here insisted on. Everyone is to worship Him, because the whole earth, both the

Jewish *kingdom*, and the Gentile *nations*, really belongs to Him. He is the God of all men. And though, of course, this doctrine is found in various parts of the Old Testament, it is Christianity alone which has really emphasized it, by its world-wide missions.

29. *All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and worship ;
All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him ;
Even he that cannot keep his soul alive.*

The opening words evidently refer to the feast before alluded to. And we are here told that it was to be a *religious* feast, as they were to eat and *worship*, and that not only the poor, but also the rich all over the earth, Gentiles as well as Jews, were to partake of it. And this shows conclusively that it cannot be a literal meal at Jerusalem, or anywhere else, but rather one that was *spiritual* and *world-wide*, intended for all people, of all nations.

And as before, this entirely agrees with the Holy Communion, which is essentially a religious feast, an act of *worship*, and which, though it was at first for the meek or poor only, has since included worldly potentates—the *fat ones of the earth*—in almost every country. Indeed, if it does not refer to the Holy Communion, it is difficult to see to what it does refer, as neither David nor anyone else ever made, or could make, a feast of this kind. And the last clause shows that the sovereignty of Jehovah was to be not only over all the living, but also over the departed, all of whom are *to bow before him*. This implies another great Christian doctrine, that of the *Future Judgment*, which is strongly insisted on in the New Testament, though not in the old.

30. *A seed shall serve him ;
It shall be told of the Lord unto the next generation.*

We next read of a *seed* (or *my seed*) serving Him (Jehovah). The word is probably used here, as it sometimes is in Isaiah, for a race of people or disciples.¹ Indeed, the *seed* of any religious teacher would naturally be his followers; and Christ Himself called His Apostles His *children*.² The verse would

¹ Isa. i. 4, xiv. 20, liii. 10.

² John xxi. 5.

thus mean that the Sufferer was to have a great spiritual posterity of *disciples*, each generation of whom was to tell of this wonderful deliverance to the next.

And, once more, there is nothing in the Jewish religion which in any way corresponds to this. For though the Jews might be spoken of as a *seed* serving Jehovah, this was the case long before the Psalmist wrote, whereas he implies that it was to be in the future, and in some way dependent on his own deliverance.

On the other hand, how well it suits the Christian interpretation must be obvious to everyone. For in the Christian Church we have precisely such a *seed*, or spiritual posterity of Christ's disciples. And for eighteen centuries they have been (nominally, at least) serving Jehovah, and telling the wonderful story of their Master's death and Resurrection, from one generation to the next.

31. *They shall come and shall declare his righteousness
Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it.*

And so they will continue doing to generations that are yet unborn. The last few verses, it will be noticed, contain references (more or less distinct) to as many as *six* great Christian doctrines. These are the Atonement, the Spiritual Feast, the conversion of the Gentiles, the universal sovereignty of Jehovah, the Future Judgment, and the Christian Church. They are all represented as being proclaimed by the Sufferer, and they were all, as a matter of fact, proclaimed by Christ. So here we have another interesting group of agreements.

And then as to the closing words. In the Revised Version they are hardly grammatical, and it seems better (with many critics) to place a full-stop after *born*, and omit the following *that*. The words *He had done it* would then be a separate sentence, probably referring to the whole Psalm, and meaning *It is done*, in the sense that the great work of suffering and atonement was now complete.¹ They would thus correspond to Christ's closing words on the Cross, *It is finished*; and they form a remarkable ending for a remarkable Psalm.

¹ Hengstenberg, "Commentary on the Psalms," vol. i., pp. 364, 396. 1867.