

sacredness in the last words of any great teacher. A peculiar and unique value appertains to this expression of the personal faith of the great Apostle, when to all human appearance his work was a failure, when the bright sun of his hopes was setting in lurid storm-cloud, and when, amid detraction, misapprehension, desertion, and treachery, he was going into his Gethsemane, and taking up his cross. H. R. REYNOLDS.

*ZION THE SPIRITUAL METROPOLIS
OF THE WORLD.*

PSALM LXXXVII.

THIS short Psalm attracts notice by its touches of lyric beauty, as also by the exceptionally enigmatical character of its style. The last sentence contains a fine sentiment most poetically expressed, and throughout the sacred ode snatches of sweet melody fall on the ear. Yet we are puzzled at first to know what it is all about, and fail to recognize the connection of thought which gives unity to the whole. The mere English reader, ignorant of Hebrew, and conversant only with the Authorized Version, is at a special disadvantage; for our translators have been almost as unhappy in their rendering of this Psalm as in many of the most striking passages in the Book of Job. Perplexed, apparently, by the obscurity created by a bold abrupt style, in which thoughts superficially unconnected are hastily hinted at in pregnant suggestive phrases rather than fully expressed, the authors of our English Version have given us a translation which is, in some places, almost meaningless and unintelligible. Even

after critical acumen and scholarship have done their best, obscurities and disputable points remain. But one who has access to the helps supplied by the labours of learned interpreters is in a very different position from the ordinary reader for the right understanding of the Psalm. Taking up any of the critical commentaries—that of Delitzsch, Ewald, Hupfeld, or Perowne: it matters not which, for modern scholars are in the main at one in their interpretation—he finds the Psalm becomes brightly luminous with one great and glorious thought, which may be expressed in the words, *Zion the spiritual metropolis of the world*. Thus viewed, the Psalm is seen to be a veritable light shining in a dark place, long before the dawn of the gospel day; a striking anticipation of the grand programme of St. Paul—Christ's gospel, a gospel for all the world, and for all the world on equal terms. Not that we find in it the full daylight of the era of the better hope. Here is nothing more than a tiny lamp shining in the night, lighting sufficiently a small space—the minds of the writer and of the few in Israel who shared his hope. Christian universalism and the new birth are here, but in Old Testament forms, suited to the stage in the onward progress of revelation to which the Psalm belongs. A world-wide Divine kingdom is foreshadowed, but not in the form suggested by the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria. Zion, in Christ's picture, disappears, and Jerusalem and Israel are nothing more than any other city or people. Here Zion is the centre of the world, and all the people of the earth flow to her, to enrol themselves among her citizens. And the new birth of this Psalm is not the purely spiritual experience referred to in the discourse

of our Lord to Nicodemus. It is a politico-moral regeneration: it consists in becoming citizens of the kingdom over which God rules in Israel, and results in the vast extension of an already existing national commonwealth.

That this is the general drift of the Psalm will be evident from the following version, which, apart from details, indicates the concurrent opinion of modern scholars as to its meaning. The points on which divergent views are entertained will be indicated as we proceed.

1. His (God's) foundation is in the holy mountains.
2. Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.
[Then follows the sum of the glorious things spoken, God Himself being the Speaker.]
4. I will proclaim Rahab (*i.e.*, Egypt) and Babylon as being among them that know me. Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, and Ethiopia, this (that is, each of these) is born there (in Zion).
5. And concerning Zion it shall be said:
Man upon man (that is, a multitude of men) is born in her,
And the Highest himself shall establish her.
6. Jehovah shall count, when he reckoneth up the people,
This (and this, and this) is born there.
7. And singing, and dancing likewise (they shall say):
All my springs are in thee.

Let us now try to elucidate this choice lyric. And first, a word on the Superscription. The Psalm is dedicated to the *Sons of Korah*. The Superscription forms, of course, no part of the original writing; and what is meant by inscribing a Psalm to the sons of Korah, or to Asaph, or to Jeduthun, is by no means clear. We know that the singers of each of the three Levitical families had a head, or leader of song, belonging to the same tribe and family with themselves, and that in David's day the names of

such leaders were Heman, descended from Kohath through Korah, Asaph, descended from Gershom, and Jeduthun, descended from Merari, and that the three divisions of the Levitical musicians were in all subsequent time called after the names of these men. We can easily understand how compilers of Psalms might attach to such compositions the names which had become the traditional representatives of the service of song. But why certain Psalms should be called Psalms of Asaph, and others Psalms of Heman or of the sons of Korah, and a third group Psalms of Jeduthun, we can only conjecture. It is, however, natural to suppose that the character and contents of the Psalm had some influence on the dedication. Looking at the Psalms which bear these names respectively, we find not a little to support this view. The Psalms of Asaph (the 50th, and from the 73rd to the 83rd, with the exception of the 77th) are all of a sombre tragic nature. They treat of the national life of Israel in its present low condition as contrasted with its past glory, and resemble those parts of the prophetic writings of which the purpose is to denounce prevalent iniquity. The Psalms dedicated to Jeduthun are so few as scarcely to supply a basis for inference; but the three which bear that name (the 39th, the 62nd, and the 77th) have all one character. They are Psalms of individual life, somewhat sad in tone, yet not without gleams of faith and hope to alleviate the gloom. As for the Psalms for the sons of Korah, there can be no dubiety as to their general character. With exception, perhaps, of the 42nd, 43rd, 44th, and 88th, they are not only remarkable for their lyric beauty and rich poetic feeling and diction, but also for their *cheerfulness*. They

are composed, so to speak, in major keys, and breathe the spirit of hope and joy. The 45th Psalm is devoted to the praise of the fairest of the sons of men; the 46th sings of the river which gladdens the city of God; the 47th celebrates the universal sovereignty of Zion's King; the 48th proclaims the unrivalled beauty of the city of the great King; the 49th expresses faith in a life for the good beyond the grave; the 84th describes, in pathetic strains, the felicity of those who enjoy abiding fellowship with God; the 85th presents a beautiful picture of a national prosperity, in which mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. All these Psalms belonging to the Korah group have a certain common character. They celebrate the glory of Israel and her king, and capital and temple, and the privileges of those who have the happiness to belong to the chosen race; and some of them foretell more glorious days to come, when an ideally perfect King shall reign in righteousness, and when Jerusalem shall be the capital, not only of Judah, but of the whole earth. In this respect they resemble, and may be compared with, those portions of the prophetic writings which, turning away from the sorrowful present, depict, in impassioned language, the good time coming. Thus the very title of our Psalm, ascertained by induction to have a certain significance, prepares us to find in it not only a buoyant joyous tone, but a catholic spirit, in harmony with the most humane and generous utterances of Hebrew prophecy.

And this is just what we do find. The Psalm, indeed, begins with an irrepressible boasting in God as the God of Zion and of Israel, his chosen people. It declares that God hath in Zion a dwelling-place, whose

foundation is laid among the holy mountains which surround Jerusalem.¹ And it represents Jehovah as well pleased with his chosen abode. "The Lord," it is written, "loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" and it is implied that He loves the dwellings of Jacob more than the rest of the world. But while the Psalmist makes his boast in God as the God of Israel, and more especially as the God of Zion, he does so in no exclusive narrow spirit. He is not one who wishes the chosen race to have a monopoly of Divine favour, or who, in the pride of national exclusiveness, looks down on all other nations with contempt, or who thinks that the God of Zion cares nothing for the outside world of the Gentiles. He evidently understands that Abraham and Israel were chosen to be eventually a blessing to the human race; he believes that God is King of all the earth, as well as of Judah; and he expects the advent of a time when all peoples shall know and confess Jehovah as the only true God. Far from grudging the outlying nations participation in Israel's privileges, he thinks that Israel's destiny will not be fulfilled until the partition walls shall have been thrown down, and Jews and Gentiles shall have become members of the same Divine commonwealth. He is not insensible to the present glory of Israel as the chosen inheritance and earthly home of Jehovah; but he feels that the glory of Israel while separated from the world is not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed when Israel shall lose her separateness in one grand uni-

¹ Ewald thinks that the present beginning is too abrupt even for this "most winged" Psalm, and that a half verse has fallen out of the text through error of the copyists, and that the original text stood somewhat as follows: "Zion is Jehovah's city, founded on the holy mountains."—*V. Die Psalmen*.

versal kingdom of God. Therefore he goes on to exclaim, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God;" meaning, more glorious than I have yet spoken; such things as are written in Isaiah,¹ where it is said to and of the chosen people: "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall throb and swell, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."² The glorious things referred to are not victories by force of arms, but the higher glory of a moral conquest won by Israel over heathendom, as a missionary nation called to teach the Gentiles the true religion, and to win for herself imperishable renown by presenting to the world a true and worthy idea of the Divine Being.

These and other glorious things spoken of. or to the city of God by the mouths of the prophets are summarized in the sequel of the Psalm, especially in the fourth Verse. God Himself speaks here, saying: "I will proclaim Rahab and Babel as among those who know me. Behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia, each of these is born there." This is a prophecy of a time when all the surrounding nations shall become converted to the worship of the true God, the God of Israel. The catalogue of nations is not exhaustive; in other prophecies of similar import other peoples are mentioned. In the splendid prophecy of the Sixtieth Chapter of Isaiah, already quoted, Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar, Ne-

¹ Chapter lx. 3-5.

² In making reference to this passage I do not mean to pronounce dogmatically on the date of our Psalm. On this point the learned differ. Delitzsch thinks it belongs to the time of Hezekiah; Ewald (Calvin also) thinks it is a post-captivity Psalm. Perowne says that the decision of the question depends on one's views concerning the authorship and date of the latter portion of the Book of Isaiah.

baioth, the islands of the Mediterranean, and even Tarshish, or Spain, are represented as bringing presents and offering gifts and contributing citizens to the city of the Lord in the glorious latter days. The prophet, seeing in vision ships with their white sails rising into view on the western horizon, asks: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" and then answers his own question thus: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee." The range of prophetic vision is thus much wider in the passage of Isaiah than in our Psalm, embracing not only Asia and Africa, but Europe also, within its sweep. But though the catalogue of converted lands in this Psalm is far from exhaustive, it is, we think, so constructed as to have a *representative* character. In making this statement, we have no intention of pronouncing dogmatically on the general question how far we are entitled to treat specific references to particular peoples in prophetic descriptions of the future as merely figurative language, used by the prophet with the conscious purpose of expressing thereby in concrete form certain spiritual truths or ideas. There are, it is well known, two schools of interpreters, holding very diverse opinions on this topic, as on many others connected with prophecy. There is the school of which Hengstenberg may be taken as the representative, whose theory is that revelations were made to the prophet when he was in a state of ecstasy; that he saw the future in a vision; that in vision he saw events of the remote future as

well as of the near future, but without any perspective indicating distance ; that the historical colouring drawn from present conditions was *mere* colouring, only figurative language, understood by the prophet to be of no intrinsic value, so that the sense which results after the colour has been rubbed off is the true meaning of the prophecy and of the prophet ; and, finally, that while it was possible for any one prophet to see in vision the full picture of the future, each prophet described only a part, so that the total picture is to be got by piecing together all the separate parts. In opposition to this plausible and ingenious theory of prophetic revelation, it is contended by another school, represented by such writers as Riehm and Bertheau, that ecstasy was not the only or the usual condition of the prophet when he received revelations ; that a vision was not the principal form under which he received revelations ; that the prophet's view was restricted to the near future, and that he expected the speedy accomplishment of his prophecy, while remaining ignorant of the day and hour ; that the terms in which he described the future were not regarded by him as mere colouring, to be brushed off in order to get at the essential element—for example, when he prophesied the conversion of Egypt and Babylon to the worship of Israel's God, he really expected that literally to happen ; and, finally, that the successive representations of the future given by different prophets were not fragments of one picture, which, being put together, would give a complete view of the future, but were each distinct, independent, and complete pictures, not capable of being combined into one whole, or, to change the figure, were as different stages in the growth of an organism, each superseding

the one going before, and being in turn superseded by the one coming after. It is easy to see what diverse methods of treating the prophecies these two theories involve, and how necessary it is that a man should decide which of them he is to adopt before he can pronounce an opinion on many a question connected with the Biblical prophetic literature. But for our present purpose it is not necessary that we should take a side in the controversy. For even assuming the theory advocated by Riehm or Bertheau to be the more correct, it is surely not inadmissible to say that the Psalmist, while seriously expecting the conversion of the nations, was guided in his selection of the nations to be named by a desire to express certain general ideas. It is characteristic of the poetic mind to use facts as symbols of ideas. Why should the Hebrew poet be an exception in this respect?

Assuming, then, that we have before us in this Psalm not merely a definite prophecy concerning certain nations, but picture-thinking, in which these nations are used symbolically, let us see what ideas this mode of interpretation will yield. Rahab is a poetic name for Egypt, and Egypt and Babylon are mentioned first as the two great *political powers* in existence at the time when the Psalm was written, selected as representing the "forces of the Gentiles." Next comes Philistia, the near neighbour and inveterate restless enemy of Israel, a small power compared to the other two, but, owing to its proximity, more troublesome and dangerous. In the early centuries of Israel's history, the Philistines harassed her with an incessant border warfare; after the reign of Hezekiah, they became involved in the wars between Babylon and Egypt, the

highway between the two countries running through their territory, so that the possession of their strongholds became the turning-point of the struggle between the two great rivals for the empire of the world. In every respect, then, it was meet that Philistia should enter into the prophetic picture of the golden age to come. It was natural that it should be mentioned next to Rahab and Babel, as the bone of contention between them; and no representation of Israel's future glory could be complete which did not embrace deliverance from the enmity of this alien race, and union with them under one government and one God; or, to quote the language of another prophet, which did not represent Israel as flying upon the shoulders of the Philistines seawards. Philistia, the morally perverse, inveterately hostile, grossly idolatrous people, which seemed utterly incapable of reconciliation with the chosen race, is the type and symbol of all that is *unspiritual, ungenial, passionately and habitually antagonistic to the Divine kingdom*, of those in every age who, like Saul of Tarsus, are persecutors, blasphemers, and scorers of the good; her inclusion being a token that no measure of depravity shall prove too much for God's grace, and that his kingdom shall number among its citizens many patterns of extreme longsuffering.

Next comes Tyre. "Behold Tyre, this one too shall be born there." Tyre, the great emporium of trade in the Eastern world in ancient times, "situate at the entry of the sea, a merchant of the people for many isles," boasting of her beauty and wealth, and saying in the pride of her heart, "I am a god. I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas." Tyre repre-

sents *trade, commerce, wealth sanctified unto the service of God*, instead of being devoted merely to the purposes of gratifying appetite or promoting the comfort and glory of man. The inclusion of Tyre in the list of converted nations tells us what *ought* to be at least. The actual fate of Tyre was not to be converted, but to be destroyed, and so to illustrate the words, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." Her fate reads a lesson to all great commercial nations to the effect that commerce must be a handmaid to the Divine kingdom; that permanent prosperity depends on trade being conducted in harmony with God's moral government, and in subservience to the chief end of man and the destiny of the world, which is to become the kingdom of God and of his Christ.

Last comes Ethiopia, the region of the burning tropical sun and of swarthy men, the land of the children of Ham. She too shall be born there; she too shall stretch forth her hands to God, the representative of *barbarism, of uncivilized races in all ages and climes*. The mention of her name here is encouragement and sanction to missions among the rudest tribes, bidding the Church cherish the cheering belief that no race of men has sunk so low that it cannot be Christianized, and that even savages and slaves can be enabled by Divine grace to walk worthy of their vocation as citizens of the Divine kingdom.

When this new birth of the nations takes place, the Divine commonwealth must experience a great increase in her citizenship. This is what is said in the fifth Verse. "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man is born in her," literally, "man and man,"

conveying the idea of a multitude. Hofmann thinks the phrase is rather intended to convey the idea of individuality,¹ the thought resulting being: While in other lands only the *whole people* as a unity is taken into account, in Zion men are reckoned man by man. Delitzsch objects that the prominence which would thus be given to the value of personality is in advance of the Old Testament mode of thought; but this objection will not be sustained by those who, with Pfeiderer, hold that the achievement of the prophets was to give to Israel these three great ideas: (1) Jehovah, Israel's God, the only God; (2) Jehovah reveals Himself to the individual spirit; (3) the Messianic hope.² The last clause of this Verse, "and the Highest himself shall establish her," gives the assurance that the increase and glory of Zion will not be ephemeral. God will keep the newborn citizens by his almighty power unto salvation, so that when He writes up the people, and calls over the muster-roll, each one will be there to answer to his name, this one from Babel, that one from Egypt, and so on, till the number be complete, making up a grand total gathered together from east, west, north, and south, to sit down in the kingdom of God.

Such being the Divine care of the holy commonwealth, what is the temper of its new citizens? The last Verse of the Psalm tells us: They are proud of their citizenship. The grand distinction for them is that they are citizens of Zion. They forget their former nationality, and find in the city of God their all. Their spirit is revealed in their behaviour. They go about in the city of God singing and playing on

¹ *Schriftbeweis*, vol. iii. p. 526.

² *Die Religion*, pp. 340-350.

flutes, or better, dancing, demonstrating by song and gesture their exuberant joy on being privileged to enter into the sacred commonwealth. They deem citizenship there the *summum bonum*, for they say or sing, "All my springs (of joy) are in thee." So we render the words, deeming it the best of all proposed renderings, better than Ewald's, "All my *arts* are in thee;"¹ or Hofmann's, "All my sources (of children) are in thee;"² or Hupfeld's, based on the Septuagint, "Sing and dance all my *dwellers* in thee;"³ God, in all these renderings, being supposed to be the Speaker. All my well-springs of joy are in thee, say Egypt and Babylon, who formerly gloried in their power; Philistia joins in the chorus, who formerly gloried in doing as much mischief as possible to the chosen race; Tyre also, who gloried in her merchandise; and Ethiopia, who gloried in her shame, her ignorance, barbarism, and unbridled license. The mighty man glories not in his might, nor the rich man in his riches, nor the Philistine in his warlike prowess, nor the savage in his contempt for civilization, but all glory in having the honour to be numbered among those who *know God*. In Zion is neither Babylonian, nor Egyptian, nor Philistine, nor Tyrian, nor Ethiopian, but God is all and in all.

We are apt to be surprised at finding such utterances in the Old Testament, the sacred book of an elect race, looking on it as a religious duty to keep themselves apart from the rest of the world. But, on reflection, one comes to see that the occurrence of such catholic utterances in the Hebrew Scriptures was only

¹ *Die Psalmen.*

² *Schriftbeveis*, vol. iii. p. 526.

³ The Septuagint renders the last clause of ver. 7, ἡ κατοικία ἐν σοί.

what was to be expected, if, as these Scriptures themselves represent, God's purpose in Israel's call was, from the first, one which respected the whole world. In that case, Israel's election was but a method adopted by God for blessing all peoples through one; blessing the chosen race first, that she might in turn be qualified for blessing all the rest. There was temporary exclusion of the outlying nations in order to eventual inclusion. What wonder, if such were God's plan, that there should be scattered up and down the sacred Scriptures of the elect race passages reminding those who belonged thereto that they were chosen, not for their own sakes, and so furnishing an antidote to the narrowing influence of an isolated position? We are, therefore, not at all surprised to find such an ode as that we have been studying in the Psalter. One thing only awakens in us wonder, a wonder which continued study of the Psalm rather increases than diminishes, viz., how a man to whom such a bright and glorious thought was given could be content to utter his thought in so few and so enigmatic words. But this is the way of the inspired *vates*. He inclines his ear to a parable, and utters his dark saying upon the harp, and relapses into silence, leaving his spoken word to work its way into the general thought of the world.

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