

The construction of *participial tenses* comes next under review. In this branch of scholarship imperfects and aorists alike seem to have been treated in the Revised Version with a lack of diagnosis sometimes disastrous, in a few cases fatal to the true idea.

But its examination may furnish material for another Article. Meanwhile some light food for critical rumination is provided in the rendering of *εἴπερ* and *εἴγε*. These significant particles appear in the Revision to have met with much the same treatment as *ὥστε* with its two moods, or as the participles with their two or three tenses. They are simply undifferentiated. The rendering of both *εἴπερ* and *εἴγε* in the New Version is one and the same: it is *if so be that*. This bracketing of inequalities serves to demolish the true idea in a few texts, for instance, 2 Corinthians v. 3, where see Mr. Waite's note of explanation in the "Speaker's Commentary."

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THE SECOND PSALM.

THE second Psalm has many and distinguished claims on our regard. No other psalm is so frequently quoted in the New Testament. It is the most dramatic, as it is also one of the most beautiful, lyrics in the whole Psalter. It is rife with Messianic indications. It is one of the earliest, heartiest, and most re-assuring proclamations of that final and complete triumph of good over evil in which Christ has taught us to hope.

On all these grounds, then, the Psalm claims and commands our attention. And yet we know, and can know, absolutely nothing whether of its date, its occasion, or its authorship. It "rings with the tramp of gathering armies and notes of lofty challenge." It seems to have been

written at a time "when Jerusalem was threatened by a confederacy" of hostile and rebellious powers, a confederacy which took advantage of the accession of a young and inexperienced monarch to fling off the bonds of subjection and tribute. David, Solomon, Ahaz, Uzziah, have each of them been regarded as the hero and theme of the poem; but in each case there is some lack of correspondence between the psalm and the history of their several reigns: either we find no trace of such a confederacy as is here assumed, or the confederates are not revolted tributaries, or the king against whom they rebel is not young and newly placed on the throne. And, indeed, there is no necessity for the assumption that the Psalmist had any actual king, or any series of historic circumstance, immediately in view. It may well be that he was brooding over the promise made to David when, because he had wished to build a house for God, God assured him that He would build up *his* house, and establish the throne of his kingdom. Speaking of the seed of David,¹ God said, "*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*" As he brooded over this gracious promise, it may have occurred to the Psalmist that the Divine determination, or decree, would not run smoothly to its end; that if, for a time, the wide empire of David should be maintained, it was sure, at some time, to be dismembered and assailed; hostile powers would come up against it; tributary powers would rise up against it: but, nevertheless, the purpose of God would stand fast, his promise would be made good: the hostile and rebellious powers would but break themselves in pieces against it: nay, despite all their assaults, that kingdom would grow and spread till it reached and covered the uttermost parts of the earth.

It may be that the Psalmist had no one actual king in his eye, but *the* king, the *ideal* king, any and every son

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 14.

of David who proved himself to be also a son of God by his fidelity to his royal call and vocation. For, if that were so, it at once explains the lofty Messianic prevision of the Psalm. There is but a step between the ideal king and the Messianic king—a step, moreover, which the poets and prophets of Israel were for ever taking. When they thought of the King in the abstract, the King as he should be, they thought of the Messiah; just as when we think of the ideal Father, we think of God.

We can name neither the hero of the Psalm, nor its author; and from the very structure of the Psalm we may infer, I think, that the author did not care to be known; that he had what we are told the true artist must have—"the divine courage to eclipse himself, and disappear in his own immortal work." It is one of the most impersonal and dramatic of songs. So far from obtruding himself upon us, the Poet retires behind his own work, and is content to give us simply the reflection of what he saw and the echo of what he heard.

His psalm owes its dramatic power mainly, of course, to the fact that he leaves the persons whom he briefly introduces to speak for themselves, and reports the very words of the confederate Princes (Verse 3), of Jehovah (Verse 6), and of the King who is his Son (Verses 7 and 8); even the speech of the King being, not a monologue, but a dialogue, and therefore all the more dramatic.

The dramatic force of the Psalm is obvious to every reader; but its lyrical beauty is, for the most part, obvious only to the accomplished Hebraist. We can all see that the Psalm divides itself into four strophes, of three verses each. Those who are at all familiar with the lyrical poetry of our own land, or of ancient Greece and Rome, cannot but feel that the abrupt question with which the Psalm opens, plunging at once into the very centre and heart of its theme, is in the true lyrical style. But it is impossible

to reproduce in English the subtle vocal and rhythmical changes by which the Poet compels his words, and the very sound of his words, to express and carry his meaning. Most of us must be content to hear that his selection of epithets is so exquisite, and his "phrasing" so subtle and eloquent, as to render the poem at once the joy and the despair of the translator. Thus, for instance, one Commentator tells us that, in the Original, the exclamation of Verse 3—

Up! let us burst their bonds asunder,
And cast away their cords from us!

sounds like "the murmur of hatred and defiance" it expresses; so that you hear in it, says another "the precipitancy and rage of the speakers." And, again, in Verse 5—

Then shall he speak to them in his wrath,
And thunder at them in his hot displeasure—

another fine Hebrew scholar says, "The rhythm changes, and becomes full and sonorous, rolling like thunder"; while a commentator of still livelier imagination—for even a commentator *may* have imagination—hears "a peal of thunder" in the first line of the Verse, and sees "the lightning's destructive flash" in the second line. But, whatever allowance we may make for the imagination of scholars, who are not usually thought to be surcharged with that fine faculty, we may be sure that words which move them so deeply must be fit words and choice, words exquisitely selected and arranged.

I. The manifold beauties of the Psalm, however, will grow upon us, I hope, as we proceed to examine it strophe by strophe, and verse by verse.

The First Strophe (Verses 1-3), opens with an abrupt question, a peremptory *why*,—

Why have nations raged tumultuously,
And why do peoples meditate vanity?

in which even the change from the past tense in "Why *have*?" to the present tense in "Why *do*?" is not without force; since, while the latter indicates a present outbreak, the former points back to the motives, or the conspiracy, from which it sprang. In short, the Poet asks the double question, Why *did* they cherish this rebellious rage? and What *do*, or can, they hope to gain by it? What does it now aim at? and, What first impelled them to it? And the question expresses, by its very abruptness, both his horror and his astonishment at the wild tumultuous scene on which he gazes. It is not a cruel tyrant, not even an austere or careless and indifferent despot, against whom the nations and their princes are leagued. It is Jehovah Himself, Jehovah merciful and gracious, who is assailed in the person of the King whom He has set on the throne. What can have moved them to conspire against *Him*? or how, against Him, can they hope to succeed? They are but meditating vanity. The attempt must be as fruitless as it is groundless. The Almighty cannot be overcome. To cast off the rule of the All-good is but to sink into darkness and perdition. Hence the insanity of the attempt astonishes the Psalmist as much as its wickedness terrifies and revolts him.

The horror grows upon him. For, as we learn from Verse 2, it is not only "the ignorant populace," it is not only "the base multitude," which has risen, in momentary rage, to create a passing tumult; but kings of the earth have set or arrayed themselves, have assumed, that is, an attitude of fixed and deliberate hostility, and princes, born leaders of men, have conspired together.¹ It is *they* who

¹ Again mark the change of tense; the first line being in the present tense to indicate that the Poet *sees*, as it were, the array before his eyes; while the past tense of the second line points back to the conspiracy which preceded the muster and array:

Kings of the earth *array* themselves,
And princes *have* conspired together.

have prompted the people; they who have stirred up the tumult; they who lead the revolt.

The closing words of the Verse disclose at once the design they cherish, and the utter hopelessness of it. It is against Jehovah and against his Messiah, *i.e.* against One whom Jehovah has called and anointed, that they have conspired, on whom they make war: and what can they do against One round whom *God* has cast his shield and for whom He fights?

The Poet not only sees the raging and mutinous host; he also hears its menace. In Verse 3 he gives us the very words of the kings and princes who have set themselves to contend with God and his Anointed. And in this impatient exclamation a deep truth is conveyed. It is always for *freedom*, and yet *against* freedom, that men fight when they break the bonds of his law asunder. When men sin, it is not so much the wish to do wrong by which they are moved as the wish to do what they like. The Divine law seems to fetter them, to curtail their natural liberty. It is *a bond*, and they want to break it; *a cord*, and they want to cast it away. They forget, or they do not know, that to break from this bond is to fall into the most degrading and intolerable of slaveries, to become at once the slave and the victim of their own lusts. And yet it is precisely here that the utter hopelessness of their conflict and endeavour lies. The law of God does but formulate the demands of their own nature, the conditions of their own welfare. To do that which is right—right for creatures such as we are in such a world as this—is the only way of peace, freedom, blessedness. To walk at large, they *must* keep God's commandments. To violate these is to wrong their own nature; to sin against God is to sin against their own soul. To break the law is to become a slave to the very lust which prompts them to break that law. And hence the conspiracy of these kings and princes against God was also

a conspiracy against themselves; their enterprise could only defeat itself, since the more successful it was the more ruinous it would be.

The Second Strophe (Verses 4-6). How, then, could He who sits in heaven but laugh at them? How could He but have them in derision, when He saw them strutting to their own confusion as they marched with tumultuous banners against Him, defeating themselves in the very hour of their triumph, and binding themselves in a more cruel bondage with every blow they struck for freedom? We may scruple, as many good men do, to ascribe irony to God; nor are we bound to be content with the hard stern conception of God which was quite reasonable in an ancient Hebrew psalmist. But we cannot possibly doubt or deny "the irony of events;" we cannot conceal from ourselves a very grave and pathetic irony in the position of men whose very triumph is their defeat, and who, aiming at freedom, sink into slaves by gaining the very freedom at which they aim. And if God be the great Author and Disposer of events, if it is by his will that those who fight against Him defeat themselves, and those who become rich and great in this world by violating his law ruin and impoverish themselves in all that is really worth having, why need we hesitate to ascribe irony to Him? The events do not put the irony into themselves; it is put into them by the great Author and Disposer of events.

So, again, when we read, in Verse 5, that, after laughing and mocking at those who set themselves against the bonds and cords of his law, only to slip from the protection of that law into its penal discipline;—when we read that God not only laughs and mocks at them, but *speaks to them in his wrath, and thunders at them in his hot displeasure*, we may once more hesitate to receive this ancient conception of the Almighty. We may say: "God is not a man that He should be angry, and still less that He should storm and

rave in his anger like a man in whom passion is strong and judgment weak." And, no doubt, there is reason, and warrant, for what we thus feel and say. And yet what do we mean when, for example, we speak of "a cruel lot," or "a stern retribution," or even of "the storms of fate"? Do we not mean that the conditions of human life are often very hard; that the law which governs our life includes an element of inflexible and unrelenting rigour; that we have to encounter much which is hostile, or which seems to be cruelly hostile, to our present happiness; and even that we are exposed to tempests of calamity in which we are wrecked? But who appointed the conditions of human life, and gave its law, and sends the storms in which men sometimes perish, if not God? Must we not admit, then, that He does at times speak to us in wrath, and thunder at us in his displeasure? Nay, must we not admit that He always speaks thus to us when we fight against Him and his law? that He is for ever and inflexibly opposed to all that is evil in us, and quite inexorable in punishing us for the evils we do?

It surely is not possible to deny it; nay, nor even so much as to wish that it were otherwise. For what does it come to after all save this?—that God is so bent on our good that He will not pass by any evil in us; that, simply because He loves us and seeks our true abiding welfare, He is inflexible in the discipline by which He purifies and transforms us: and that He is inexorable in demanding that all which makes war on Him shall be defeated, if not destroyed, because it also makes war upon us. It is this good kind end of God which reconciles us to his anger and teaches us the mercy of judgment; for anger against evil means love of that which is good; and the judgments which purge us from evil are the truest and divinest mercy.

It is thus, then, that *we* conceive of God, and love Him

all the more because He is angry with us every day,¹ since his very anger is designed to make us more worthy of his love: for if He were content with us as we are, and while we are so discontented with ourselves, we could not love Him as we do, nor would there be any hope of our becoming better than we are. And I am by no means persuaded that our conception of God, modern as we think it, was wholly unknown to the Hebrew psalmist. For observe what it is that he represents Jehovah as saying (Verse 6) even when He speaks in wrath and thunders in hot displeasure: *But I, I have set my King upon Zion, my holy mountain.* "I" is the emphatic word of the Verse, and by its emphatic position denotes the verse to mean: "But *I* for my part, let men plot, let them strive, as they will, have found a King for them, and have fixed Him on a throne which can never be shaken."

Thus read, read in their true sense, the words do not sound very angry, as men understand anger. Nor is the fact they announce a hostile or unwelcome fact. That God has chosen the real Ruler of the world, that this Ruler is one who calls God "Father" and whom God calls "Son," and that his rule can never be endangered or overthrown, however men may fret and strive against it, or triumph in the thought that they have thrown it off,—this is not bad news for the world, but the very best news. It is not unwelcome news to us who believe in God, but most welcome,—the very Gospel in which we trust and rejoice. It is not bad news, however unwelcome as yet, even to those who rage and strive against the Divine rule; for, as we have seen, their triumph would be their defeat, their success their overthrow; while their defeat may be their triumph, and their compelled submission to the Divine law may teach them that a willing obedience is their only

¹ See Psalm vii. 11, where "the wicked" is a gratuitous and misleading insertion.

path to safety and freedom. For the evil they have meditated and done, they must suffer indeed; but, for evil men, to suffer for evil is often the shortest way to the love and service of goodness.

If, then, though the Psalmist thinks of God as speaking in anger, he also thinks of Him as speaking so graciously as this,—as declaring that the world shall have, and shall eventually submit to, a Divine Ruler and a Divine law, we can hardly pronounce his conception of God to be a defective one, or admit that in much it differs from our own.

The Third Strophe (Verses 7-9). And that he does think thus nobly of God is put beyond doubt in the third strophe of his Psalm. For here he allows the King whom God has anointed and enthroned to speak for Himself, or, rather, to repeat what He has heard from the mouth of Jehovah: and from this royal declaration, this Divine decree, we learn that the true King of men reigns, not by the will of men, but by the grace of God. His throne is defended, not simply by right, but by a Divine promise or decree. He is not only a *King* anointed by God; He is also God's *Son*. He has but to ask, in order to receive an universal dominion, a dominion including all nations and stretching to the very ends of the earth. All power is committed to Him, so that He shall beat down those who oppose themselves to his rule as with a sceptre of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

In this noble description of the true King of men (a fuller treatment of which I reserve till we have to deal with the Messianic aspect of the Psalm) there is nothing which jars upon our ears, unless it be the images of Verse 9. All else falls in with our loftiest conceptions of what such a Lord and Ruler should be. And these images are interpreted to us, and fall into their due place, as we remember once more that to beat down evil is to release and set up good, that to destroy iniquity is to establish righteousness;

as we once more remember the inexorable penalties which wait on evil, and the grace by which those who have been broken by the penalties of the law are often recovered to its love and service. And I venture to say that no picture of the growing rule of Love and Righteousness in the earth would either be true to the facts of the case, or would commend itself to the reason and conscience of man, if it failed to find room for the misery and destruction of those who consciously and deliberately set themselves against it. We see the misery they both breed, and endure, every day. And, for ourselves, we feel that, in so far as *we* are disobedient to the law and disloyal to the rule of God, we deserve to suffer, and could neither be content to be treated as though we had done no wrong or harm, nor cherish any steadfast hope of being redeemed from our sins if we were not also punished for our sins.

The Fourth Strophe (Verses 10-12). It is as we contemplate the miseries and degradations bred by evil on every side, by which our own life is stunted and deformed and the lives of many of our neighbours are embittered and despoiled, that we enter into the force and pathos of the exhortation which the Psalmist appends to this glowing description of the Divine Ruler, and feel the utter groundlessness and fruitlessness of opposing it. Well may he who has so deeply felt the beneficence of that Rule, and has seen so far into the ends of mercy involved in its very terrors, admonish men to desist from their mad enterprise, to submit to a rule they cannot escape, to rejoice in a rule which seeks nothing but their good; and yet to "tremble" as they rejoice lest, in any measure, while seeking to serve the King, they should slip into any disobedience to his will, and so provoke Him, or the God who anointed Him, again to anger. Well may *he* beseech them to render a constant and affectionate homage to the Son and Lord whom God has set over them who knows how

easily men wander from his ways into ways of their own choosing, and how inevitably those who walk in their own way perish in that way. Well may he who has felt the blessedness of those who are reconciled to God and his rule invite us also to take refuge in Him, and to prove that we have taken refuge in Him by striving against the evil He hates and seeking to overcome evil with good.

II. Nothing in this Psalm is more admirable than the conviction which lies on its very surface; viz., the settled and immovable belief of the inspired Poet that, in the end, good must triumph over evil. So far as he could see, there was but one race of men which knew and served the only true God, the true King and Lord of men; and this elect race did not stand high nor bulk large in the estimation of the world. From the first the great military races had set themselves against it, or had absorbed the tiny province it cultivated into their wide-spread empires without any sense of effort. At the moment in which he wrote there was a deliberate conspiracy among these world-powers, or some of them, against the people whom God had chosen to be his witnesses in the earth. And yet the Psalmist contemplates the issue of the conflict without a single misgiving. His confidence in the triumph of the good cause, the cause of virtue and religion, does not waver for a moment. His faith is not for an instant sicklied o'er with the pale cast of doubt. In the strongest contrast to the craven pessimistic tribe who deem it a mournful sign of their superiority to their fellows that they hold the worst opinion of God and man, and can look up into an empty heaven and forward to a barren and dispeopled earth untouched with ruth and terror, he cherishes a cheerful confidence in the goodness of God, and in the ultimate victory of that goodness over all that is evil in man and in the conditions of human life. The world is *not* to be

swept as rubbish to the void. The race is not on its road to silence and death. The powers of evil are not to triumph and rejoice. All who set themselves against truth and goodness set themselves against God, and against his will and purpose for humanity. The greater their apparent triumph the greater and the more certain will be their real defeat. They *must* be conquered, and that in the noblest way, by being drawn into the very kingdom against which they have conspired and made war.

And when we remember that the Psalmist rose to this conviction by the inspiration of God, we may well find in it at once a grave rebuke of our own misgivings and doubts, and a warrant for the largest and most confident hopes for the future of the world and of man.

This hopeful and assured conviction of the ultimate triumph of good over evil took, as was natural and inevitable, a peculiar form in the prophetic soul of a Hebrew psalmist. For the Hebrew mind was impatient of the abstractions in which the philosophic Greek mind expatiated with ease and delight. It was poetic rather than philosophic, and clothed its largest and most abstract thoughts in concrete forms. And hence, to the Hebrew, the triumph of goodness shaped itself as the triumph of good men, or of a good race of men, or of the sovereign Lord and Ruler of men; while the defeat of evil shaped itself as the defeat of bad men, or bad kings, or bad angels, who had conspired together against the Lord and against his Anointed. It is to this habit of thought that many of the Psalms owe, at least in part, their Messianic character. We need not imagine, we shall only be led astray if we do imagine, that the inspired Hebrew prophet, dreaming of things to come, was raised to a height from which he could look down through the centuries and see the very figure of the Son of Man as He passed through the streets of Jerusalem and across the plains and hills of Galilee, and was thus enabled

not so much to predict as to describe many of the features of his lot, many even of the minuter details of his life. *That*, so far as we can learn, was not the manner in which the Spirit moved and wrought in the Hebrew seers; but rather this:—Just as many of the great thinkers of Greece, disappointed by the defects and failures of the turbulent democracies by which they were surrounded, dreamed of *an ideal republic*, and forecast the conditions of human life under such a republic as that of which they dreamed; so the Hebrew prophets, as the several kings of their race disappointed the fond hopes they had cherished, fell to dreaming of *an ideal king* under whose rule their hopes would be fulfilled, and endeavoured to forecast what the conditions of his kingdom must inevitably be if a true reign of God were to be set up in the earth, and if all the subjects of that kingdom were to be made righteous and holy and free: if, in short, the evil that is in men, and in the social and political conditions of men, was to be really overcome of good. An inspired *speculation*, an inspired forecast, of this kind, if at least God be the real Lord and Governor of human life, could not fail in many respects to be a true prediction. There *must* be a sacred reality answering to, and even excelling, their loftiest conceptions,—a King and a Kingdom corresponding to their thoughts, fulfilling and outrunning their hopes. And if, as we believe, they were moved by no one less than God Himself to brood over this ideal King and Kingdom, if his Spirit moulded and guided their thoughts, how could they fail to rise to a true prævision of the things which afterwards came to pass, and for the full development of which we still wait? No doubt, as they brooded over it, their ideal would rise and grow, so that the later prophet would see more than the earlier, the greater prophet more than the lesser. No doubt it would vary according to the structure, bent and capacity of their several natures, so that the more spiritual

man would frame the clearer and larger conception of it, and the less spiritual the more secular and imperfect conception of it. No doubt even that the ideal conception would take some tinge of mortal infirmity from even the noblest and greatest minds through which it passed; so that the King, when He came, would be other, better, diviner than they had prepared the world to expect. But, nevertheless, if we believe in God, if we believe that one day his kingdom is to come and his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and if we believe that holy men of old were moved by God to conceive and to tell men what this kingdom would be like, we may well believe also that, though they never saw the historic Christ, their prævisions of the ideal King would be true though inadequate predictions of Him; that the conceptions quickened in them by the Divine Spirit would correspond to the sacred reality and purpose in the Divine Mind: in fine, that their psalms would be true Messianic psalms.

Now if any psalm in the whole Psalter has a Messianic element and character, it must be admitted that this Second Psalm has it. Not only is it more frequently quoted in the New Testament Scriptures than any other psalm; it also anticipates two of the leading New Testament names for the Saviour of Mankind. In Verse 2 it calls the true King of men "the *Messiah* of God," *i.e.*, the *Christ*; while in Verse 7 it describes Him as "the *Son of God*." Nay, more; the New Testament distinctly applies the declaration of Verse 7—"Thou art my Son; *this day have I begotten thee*"—to Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, and so applies it to Him as to interpret its meaning and bring out its full force. For the curious and difficult phrase, "This day have I *begotten* thee," really means, "This day have I called thee to a new existence, to a new career, to a new life." And when we ask, "What was the day on which the Son of God and the King of men was raised to a new life and a

new career?" St. Paul replies (Acts xiii. 33; Romans i. 14), that that day was the day in which God raised Jesus from the dead, and thus declared Him to be "the Son of God with power." According to the New Testament, the day of Christ's resurrection was the day on which He was crowned and enthroned, the day on which He was called to enter on a new existence, a new career, to take unto Himself the great power over men He had acquired by his redeeming death, and to reign over those whom He had thus delivered from their bondage to the Prince of the powers of this world; and hence the Church still calls that day *dies regalis*.

There can be no doubt, then, that our Psalm is declared on the highest authority to be a true Messianic psalm; a psalm in which the true King of men is so nobly conceived and portrayed that we are to see in it a prophetic anticipation of Jesus the Christ. And how worthy it is to be ranked in this royal order of Psalms we shall still further see as we consider the conception of man's true Lord and King which it places before us.

1. And, first of all, it is to be observed that, according to this Psalm, the true King of men must be of God's choosing and not of man's; He must be "the *Lord's* Anointed": He must even be the Lord's "*Son*,"—so one with God as ever to do his will and to rule by his law. We are not to be left to choose our King for ourselves, in the darkness of our own ignorance, lest we choose a king like ourselves, a king with many shining qualities perhaps, but at bottom as unwise, unjust, and imperfect as his fellows; unable, therefore, to guide us in our deepest perplexities, or to defend us from the perils we most fear. He must be chosen for us by a *Divine* wisdom; He must be clothed with a *Divine* power; He must be animated by a *Divine* goodness; He must reign by a *Divine* right; He must rule us by a *Divine* law. Under whatever human and subordinate governments we may be, and however

we may suffer from their injustice, their unwisdom, their impotence, we must feel that, through and above all earthly rule, we are ruled from Heaven and ruled by One who will defend us in straits beyond the reach of mortal arm; who will so correct all that is wrong, and so compensate us for all that is unjust or injurious, in the incidence of earthly laws, as that even the mistakes of man and the wrongs of time shall contribute at last to our true wealth and dignity and peace.

The ideal King must be one of whom God Himself can say, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son," in order that He may rule us, not by the imperfect codes of earth, but by the pure and perfect law of God: since no other law could possibly content us, no other law could possibly secure and establish our well-being. For if God, our Maker and Father, be good, He can only will our welfare. His law is but the expression of his will. His law, therefore, can only formulate the conditions of our welfare. So that only as we are ruled by that law can our true, our highest and enduring, welfare be secured.

It is as we enter into this most true and sustaining conception of the law of God, as we believe it to be nothing more nor less than a law which declares and enforces the conditions on which our well-being depends, that we come to understand the inexorableness of that law, and can rejoice that no deviation from it is permitted, that no escape from it is possible. But if we once rise to this conception, even the most extreme expressions of the irrevocableness of Divine law no longer shock or surprise us. Even when the Psalmist represents God as laughing and mocking (Verse 4) at the men who set themselves against Him, or as thundering at them in his hot displeasure (Verse 5); even when he represents the Son of God as breaking them with an iron sceptre and dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel

(Verse 9), we are not shocked or surprised; for we see that men who oppose themselves to the Divine law and rule oppose themselves against their own welfare and the welfare of the world. We cannot so much as wish that it were otherwise. For we say: Men who break the very conditions of their own welfare *must* suffer; to sin against God's law is to violate these conditions; to reject the King and Saviour of men is to adjudge themselves unworthy and to render themselves incapable of their own true life and blessedness, which can only be attained by submission to his rule and obedience to his will. Their punishment is inevitable; it is self-inflicted; and it is as merciful as it is inevitable. They *must* be unmade and remade, born anew and born from above, before they can enter on their true life and rise toward their true blessedness; and before they can be remade they must be broken in pieces. Even for ourselves we do not desire, if at least we are wise, to escape from punishment, until we are freed from sin, or to be freed from the sufferings which make men perfect until we have become perfect. Our prayer is, "Thy will be done in and by us; and, till we can do that will freely and perfectly, continue to chasten and discipline our wills and to make them one with thine."

Nor can we too seriously lay it to heart that heaven and hell are not *future* states simply, but also *present* states. However little we may be conscious of the fact at the time, we plunge into hell the very moment we break that Divine law obedience to which is essential to our welfare; and so long as we cleave to our sin, and refuse to submit to that law, we remain in the hell into which we have plunged. Its fires must kindle upon us; its thunders must peal against us; we must be crushed and broken by the law we have attempted to break. Our only hope of rising into a heaven of peace and rest hangs on our apprehending where our true welfare lies, and in a willing adoption of the

law which secures our welfare. Until we "kiss the Son," until, *i.e.*, we are reconciled to the true King of men and render Him a cheerful and unforced homage, we can only "perish in our way" (Verse 12); for, consciously or unconsciously, we are walking in the very way of perdition, a way which leads us straight against the inexorable law by which the world is really ruled, sustained, and defended.

2. We have to observe, once more, that the true King of any one race of men must be the King of all men; or, to put the thought in another form, if any one race is to be secure and happy in its obedience to Him, all races must become his willing and obedient subjects.

Nothing is more surprising in our Psalmist than "the long mind" and "the large heart" which enabled him to rise so far above the prejudices of his time and race as to see that God was the God of all men, and that God's Anointed must be, not the King of the Jews only, but also the King of all nations to the very ends of the earth. Some nations, indeed, with their kings and princes, were in rebellion against Jehovah and against his Messiah; but their rebellion is foredoomed to defeat, and the Christ has only to ask in order to receive "the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." And when we remember that the Jews were the haughtiest and most exclusive of races, that they held themselves to be the elect and sacred strain of humanity, and looked down with contempt rather than pity on the "sinners of the Gentiles," it is simply wonderful that the writer of this Psalm, whatever his date, should have embraced a conception so large and humane as that which finds expression in Strophes III and IV. It seems as if he must have anticipated thoughts which are comparatively rare with us, and have seen that the true King of the Jews must also be the King of the Philistines, the Edomites, the Egyp-

tians, the Assyrians, and of all nations, even the most distant, who came into commercial, political, or military connection with them; that the welfare and happiness of his own people could only be established on solid and lasting foundations in proportion as all other nations were brought under the Divine sceptre and law.

But whatever his conception may have been, and however he may have reached it, the words in which he depicts the true King of Men cover and suggest an ideal which more and more commends itself to the wisest modern thought, though even yet it has hardly penetrated and coloured the common thought of the day. A King who should govern men by a law written on their minds and hearts, the only law which can secure their wellbeing and happiness, is the ideal King of modern science as well as of ancient prophecy; and such a King, administering such a law and permitting no deviation from it, we have seen God's Anointed to be. But, even for *our own* welfare, our larger modern experience has taught us that it is not enough that the ideal King should reign over one race and enforce his law in one realm. We have learned as men could not learn until the means of communication with all parts of the world had become rapid, easy, instantaneous, that absolutely nothing human is alien to us. It is not only that, to be secure, we need to be defended against the aggressions of great military empires which lie near to us, and from any arrest of the main streams of commerce by which we are fed and enriched. It is also that no strife can break out, no public crime be committed on sea or land, no loss, disaster, or calamity, befall any race, however savage or remote, but that it jars on some sensitive chord, touches and distresses some of our interests, and more or less directly affects our welfare and our peace. If only to secure *us* from harm, loss, misery, our King must be King in all the earth, and the law which governs our life must govern all lives.

Nor is it only our commercial and political interests which are involved ; it is also our humanity, our piety, our concern for the good of man and the advance of that Kingdom which makes it our chief aim to raise the fallen, to comfort the sorrowful, to reclaim the lost, to deliver the oppressed, to civilize the rude. Time was, indeed, when even in this Christian nation men assumed that mere conquest was glory, that we became strong by weakening others and enriched ourselves by impoverishing them ; and no doubt there still linger among us certain belated politicians who cleave to these antiquated and exploded maxims, and think to make England great and wealthy by inflicting loss and misery on other races, by taking advantage of their weakness or their misfortunes. Happily, however, most of us have learned—some by the teaching of a wiser political economy, but more by imbibing more of the spirit of Christ—that one nation becomes great as it helps to make other nations great and free ; and that then only can we become wealthy and secure as all races rise into happier and more prosperous conditions, and are safe from strife and alarms.

Even from the purely commercial and political point of view, we long and pray for the time when all nations will dwell together in amity and peace, when the law of God shall become the law of all realms, and Christ the King shall rule in all hearts. And as Christian men, as men touched and moved by Christian charity, how much more must we long for the time when all nations shall be given Him for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession ! For we cannot bear the yoke of the Divine law lightly and happily while many of our neighbours both refuse to bear it and are for ever tempting us, by the whole strain and spirit of their lives, to throw it off or to let it slip from our necks. If the mind that was and is in Christ be in us, we cannot be free from pangs of grief and pity while

any race, or any man, sets himself against his own welfare and the welfare of the world, by setting himself against the Divine law. So many suffer by one man's sin as well as the man himself. The whole world is the poorer and the worse so long as any race remains outside the pale of the kingdom of our God and his Christ. How, then, can we be at peace, or rest from our labours, while men and races thus plunge themselves into an inevitable and growing misery? How can we but beseech them to "kiss the Son" lest they perish in their way? how can we but cry to the true King of men, and beseech Him to take unto Himself his great power and reign in all the earth?

I take leave to doubt whether this view of Christ, as the true King of Men, as ruling them by a law inscribed on their very nature, and permitting no violation of it to go unpunished, simply because obedience to its statutes is the imperative and indispensable condition of human well-being; as destined, therefore, in proportion as men come to know themselves, their needs, and the sole condition on which their needs can be satisfied and their welfare secured, to rule over all nations; and as, meantime, electing one race, or the Church, to his service only that in and through them, He may teach, raise, and bless all the families of the earth: I doubt, I say, whether this view of Christ as the one true, universal, and eternal King of Men, ancient though it be, has been set forth with the force, the fervour, the emphasis which its importance demands. For, surely, had it been duly impressed on the minds of men, it would have forestalled many of the objections to the Christian Faith with which modern thought is rife. With this view before him, no man could imagine that Religion deals with the future to the neglect of the present life; or that the Divine Law to which it invites men to submit is an arbitrary prescription, ill adapted to the constitution of man; or that the Gospel which it proclaims is intended for the

advantage of an elect few, and brings only tidings of the stroke of doom to the great mass of mankind ; or that it applies itself only to one aspect of human existence, in place of covering and blessing it through all its aspects, relations, and pursuits. And hence we have much still to learn from this noble Hebrew psalm, and may well find a very "*present truth*" in its antique but not outworn forms of thought.

S. Cox.

STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS.

I. JONAH.

THE prophet Jonah is the earliest star in that great movement of illumination which glorified the reigns of Jeroboam II., Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah ; he is the dawn of which Isaiah is the noontide. His rising is the boundary-line between two worlds—the age of sense and the age of faith ; and therefore the Book which bears his name is a strange blending of the historian and the preacher. Perhaps of all the Jewish prophets, Daniel excepted, it is the Book whose contents are most widely and popularly known ; it points a moral even to the child in the nursery. The narrative form in which it is cast has made its sayings household words. Joel, Amos, Hosea, Habakkuk, even Isaiah, are in their personal aspect little more than names ; but the incidents of the life of Jonah are familiar to our earliest years. We have received an indelible picture of the man, with his faults and his misfortunes. The call to a Divine mission ; the attempt to avoid that call by flight ; the great storm on the deep, pointing to an act of transgression ; the casting out of the Prophet into the waves ; his miraculous preservation ; his subsequent struggles to fulfil his office, and his final lament over his withered gourd : all these are familiar even to our earliest years.