

“CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR.”

(HEB. II. 9.)

PROFESSOR BRUCE's able and interesting exposition of this difficult passage deserves the most respectful consideration. His view is that Christ was crowned by the Father with glory and honour in His earthly life. This honour and glory was just in a word His position as one appointed to die in behalf of others. For God to appoint “Him to an office in which He will have an opportunity of doing a signal service to men at a great cost of suffering to Himself” is to crown Him with glory and honour, and to confer a “grace” upon Him, as it is said, “That by the grace of God (to Him) He might taste of death for every man.” I am taken to task because in a footnote I made the offhand remark that this theory “contained a fine modern idea, but one to which Scripture has hardly yet advanced,” and that “Scripture did not seem to have permitted to itself the paradox of calling Christ's death a ‘glory.’”

Is the above “fine idea” anywhere found in Scripture? The question has some exegetical interest.

I. Certainly one's first feeling is, that the idea that Christ's appointment to die for men was a glory and honour conferred on Him and a grace bestowed on Him is an idea altogether out of harmony with the general tone of Scripture when referring to His sufferings and death. The tone of Scripture is represented by St. Paul (Phil. ii. 6), “Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (R.V.). And to this give all the Scriptures witness. This theory speaks of Christ's appointment to die for men as a glory and grace

conferred on Him; Scripture says, "God spared not His Son." The present epistle speaks of His enduring the cross, despising the "shame"; this theory speaks of God conferring glory upon Him by giving Him an "opportunity" of undergoing the shame. If this is not a "modern" idea, one would like to be told where to look for one. There is a multitude of passages which speak of the "grace of God" to us in appointing His Son to die, let one unequivocal one be produced which speaks of His "grace" to Christ in giving Him such an appointment. He was made a "curse" for us, being hanged upon a gibbet.

II. A number of passages however are cited, which are said to be "kindred in idea." The relevancy of these passages is not quite apparent.

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake." Surely their blessedness did not lie in being persecuted (which the analogy seems to require), nor were they yet in possession of their blessedness when persecuted, for blessedness here is not a state of mind. The whole sentence must be read: "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," a kingdom yet "to come." The sense of such passages is best seen from one of an opposite tendency: "Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."

Again, the fact is referred to that Christ conjoins His glorification with His passion. There may be danger of missing the full meaning of these profound references. It would not occur however to a plain reader that Christ's glory lay in His passion, nor that He yet had His glory (for which He prays) when undergoing His passion. The corn of wheat, to use His own symbol, is not glorious in its death, but only when through death it rises up a new full corn in the ear. But as this glory will certainly be the issue of its death, so Christ's glory arises with certainty out of His dying; and therefore on the eve of His passion He

can say, “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” The term “glorify” may in some passages be used proleptically, but other passages explain the meaning.

Further, Philippians i. 29 is adduced as in point: “Unto you it is given as a favour, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Such is the dignity of Christ and such are the things He has done for us, that it is a grace or privilege to us to be permitted even to suffer for His sake, as the early disciples rejoiced that they “were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for His name” (Acts v. 41), and as Moses counted His reproach greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. But it would be strange oblivion of the tone of Scripture to attempt to turn such passages round, and infer that it will in like manner be a “grace” to Christ to permit or appoint Him to suffer for *us*. To throw Christ into the scale along with other moral beings, and to pass a general moral judgment on His giving Himself to death as the act of a moral being among other moral beings, no respect being had to His Person, is to take a position “to which Scripture has hardly yet advanced.”

The passage 2 Peter i. 16 certainly contains the expression “honour and glory.” To a plain reader ver. 17 seems to say that God bestowed honour and glory (a common phrase) on Christ by proclaiming with a voice from heaven, “This is My beloved Son.” This acknowledgment of His relation to Him was a glory. The apostle says also that he was an eyewitness of His majesty, referring to the transfiguration. It may be uncertain whether he regarded the transfiguration as a momentary manifestation of Christ’s inherent glory as Son of God (John i. 14), or as a prelude of His glory as now exalted. The former is perhaps more natural, but either sense suits the connexion, which refers to the second coming, “the power and parousia” of Christ. The “honour and glory” spoken of by the apostle here belongs in his mind

to the same category as "majesty," and he refers to it to sustain the expectation of the *power* of Christ's appearing; but what connexion has such honour and glory with that supposed to be conferred by God on Christ in appointing "Him to an office in which He will have an opportunity," etc.?

These are the passages that are cited to show "that the crowning (as this theory conceives it) is an idea familiar to the New Testament writers." They do not appear to go very far in that direction.

III. Dr. Bruce's eminence in New Testament exegesis is so well known, that one can differ from him only with great hesitation. His exposition however of *βραχύ τι*, which when said of mankind he understands of "degree," and when said of Christ of "degree" and "time," cannot by any stretch of courtesy be called simple or perspicuous. For my part, I cannot conceive a writer in one place saying of men that "through fear of death they were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (ii. 15), and in another place saying of them that they are "made a little (in degree) lower than the angels," and therefore I have no doubt that the apostle used the phrase "a little" always in the temporal sense. More important however is the following point. It cannot be denied that the apostle refers to two conditions of mankind—their present condition, and their future one, when over the world to come; and to two conditions of Christ—His earthly life, and His state of exaltation; and that he draws a parallel between the two pairs, the parts of which correspond to one another, because it was necessary for Christ to go through the life and destiny of man along its whole line, to enable man to reach that which was destined for him. Now it is certain that "crowned with glory and honour," when spoken of mankind, refers to their future place in the world to come; but according to this theory, when spoken of Christ it refers to

His life in this world. There is no parallel between Him and us; what is predicated of us in our condition of perfection is predicated of Him in His condition of abasement. It is no answer to this to say that the "glory and honour" of Christ on earth is of course prolonged into His exalted state and intensified. The point is, that by bringing His "glory" forward into His earthly life, the parallel between it and our earthly life is dissolved. There is no longer a parallel, but a contrast.

IV. The distinction between the scriptural conception and the conception of this theory is quite plain. The Scripture writers fasten their attention on the plain historical facts connected with Christ as these appeared in their natural meaning to the ordinary judgment of men—on His exalted dignity from which He descended, on His abasement, the contradiction of sinners, the pains of death. This was in their view "shame," "weakness," a "humbling" of Himself. With the realistic concrete judgment natural to them they consider all this the deepest abasement, and they set it in sharp contrast to the "glory" to which He was exalted, which they conceive in a manner equally realistic. In neither case is their language in the least figurative, but always literal. It would have seemed to them an absurdity to call Christ's humiliation a "glory," when in the natural judgment of all men it was a "shame." The "glory" was the reward that followed it, "*because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory,*" "*wherefore also God has greatly exalted Him.*" To them as well as to their adversaries the cross was an ignominy and a "scandal," and they obviated the feeling, not by the ingenious suggestion that the shame was in another view a "glory," but by showing that the prophets had foretold it, and that the counsel of God had accomplished it, and that the temporary shame was swallowed up in the real glory of Christ exalted, a glory in which He would speedily reappear to the eyes

of the world. They, as well as the modern mind, pass a moral verdict on Christ's act, or, rather, on Christ Himself, but they do not use the word "glory" in regard to it. They say, "Worthy is the Lamb!" and He is worthy because that to which He subjected Himself was and remained "shame."

This modern theory moves on different lines. Its origin is probably this. First, a moral judgment is passed on Christ's act in giving Himself for others, and expressed in figurative language. In the ethical sphere, in the judgment of all moral beings, His act (to use figurative language) was a thing most glorious. Then the fact is reflected upon that it was God who put Him in the place where He performed this act; and the inference is drawn that God crowned Him with glory by appointing "Him to an office in which He will have an opportunity of doing a signal service to men at a great cost of suffering to Himself"; *i.e.* an act which (figuratively) is so glorious. Is there any evidence that any Scripture writer ever pursued this peculiar line of reflection? The reflection is suggested at once to the modern mind by the figurative language in which it expresses its moral verdict on Christ's act in our redemption.

That this is the line of thought that led to the curious speculation appears from the formula enunciated by Dr. Bruce, that "exalted because of" implies "exalted in." The formula is a mere heap of heterogeneous words. "Exalted in" belongs to the sphere of moral judgment, or moral worth, and modern figurative language; "exalted because of" belongs to the sphere of historical events and Scripture literal language. If Scripture language be adhered to, the formula is so far from being true, that it is the opposite of the truth—He humbled Himself, wherefore also God greatly exalted Him. Is there any evidence that any Scripture writer ever used the words "glory" or "exalted" of Christ in His act of giving His life for men, or that any

Scripture writer ever expressed his own sense of the moral worthiness of this act by such terms as "glorious" or "exalted"?

The only question that could arise is, whether the writer to the Hebrews agrees in his phraseology with the other writers. There is no reason to suppose that he differs. When he says of Christ that "He hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (iii. 3), he refers to His glory in heaven. So (I believe) he does when he says that "He glorified not Himself to be made a high priest" (v. 5). He does not speak of the high-priestly office in the abstract, nor as exercised on earth; he speaks of it under the complexion which it has as exercised in heaven. In other words, he agrees with all the New Testament writers in regarding Christ's Messianic office (or, high priesthood) as beginning to be exercised in its proper and full sense only on His ascension (Acts ii. 36). But even if the second passage referred to the office in itself, that would be far from implying that the apostle was thinking of the office as it involved death, for the office of Aaron, with whom comparison is made in the passage, did not involve death.

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THE HALLEL.

(Pss. cxiii.-cxviii.)

THE Psalms of the Hallel have a special interest from the fact that they were sung by the Jewish Church at her three great Feasts, and may thus be taken as representing her inmost thought in those hours in which she held closest communion with her God. But to us they have a still deeper solemnity, from the fact that they were sung by our Lord with His disciples at the Last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 27).