

A king is set upon the holy hill of Zion, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be his possession (ii. 6, 8) ; the enemies are beaten small as dust, and great deliverance is given to the king (xviii. 42, 50).

Sharp arrows are in the heart of the king's enemies ; all his garments are odorous ; stringed instruments out of ivory palaces gladden him ; his bride is all glorious ; the daughter of Tyre brings a gift ; the procession of virgins rejoices ; and her children shall be princes in all the earth (xlv.).

Again, the king shall have dominion from sea to sea ; the kings of Tarshish and of the isles, of Sheba and Seba, nay, all kings shall do him homage (lxxii.).

If it is only possible to remove the Psalms to the post-exilian period, at least it is only so on condition that there breathes through that epoch a fresh air, and stirs in it an exuberant energy and fulness of life, wholly inconsistent with the benumbing, ossifying, and petrifying spirit which is ascribed to it by theories like these.

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THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH PSALM.

THE 86th Psalm, as we saw last month, is not one of the most original psalms, and yet no one but a spiritually enlightened man could have entwined such tender aspirations and sweetly humble petitions. To friends of missions the psalmist ought to be especially dear, for he has given us in the ninth verse one of the most distinct prophecies of the conversion of heathen nations. God, he assures his fellow worshippers, has made all nations of the world, and not merely the Israelites. Consequently there must be a kind of filial yearning after God in the minds of the heathen.

They are prodigal sons who have wandered far from their Father, but a day is coming when, as the 22nd Psalm says, "all the ends of the earth shall remember themselves, and return unto Jehovah." We cannot doubt what that day is, according to the intention of the psalmists. It is the day when in the fullest sense God shall take up His abode among men, and "judge" or rule the world in righteousness. And so in the Revelation of St. John, immediately before the seven last great plagues, the faithful who stand by the glassy sea, and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, remember and quote the words of the Hebrew psalmist.¹

Not unfitly then did the editor of the third Book of the Psalms (Pss. lxxiii.—lxxxix.) place this psalm immediately before the 87th. It was a neglected work of great spiritual beauty which needed an honourable place in the temple-hymnbook, and so he not only called it a "prayer of David," but placed it between the 85th (like itself, a psalm in praise of lovingkindness²) and the 87th—the psalm of the catholic Church. Let us now pass on to the 87th Psalm, regarding it as an inspired poetic sketch of the happy results of the conversion of the nations.

The author of this brief but fascinating hymn is one of the temple-singers, who, devoted as he must be to his own class, looks forward with joy to the enlargement of the sacred choir by the admission of foreigners. This however is not the main subject of the psalm, though it forms a leading feature in the description. The idea which fills this holy minstrel with enthusiasm is the expansion of the Church of Israel into the Church universal. Just as the nation of Israel became transformed into the Jewish Church through the chastenings of the exile and the single-hearted devotion of the reformers Ezra and Nehemiah, so in time

¹ Rev. xv. 4.

² "Lovingkindness and truthfulness" occurs both in lxxxv. 10 and lxxxvi. 15.

to come the Church which arose out of a single nation should swell and grow till it embraced within its ample limits all that was capable of regeneration in the family of man. The psalmist was thoroughly penetrated with the great truths revealed through the Second Isaiah, who, though an admiring student—in Babylon—of the First Isaiah, had risen to heights of almost Christian insight far beyond the elder prophet.¹ Listen to these words uttered by the Second Isaiah in the name of Jehovah:

*“Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon the thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am Jehovah’s; and another shall proclaim the name of Jacob; and another shall write on his hand, Jehovah’s, and give for a title the name of Israel.”*²

Observe, it is not merely the natural “seed” of Jacob to which the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days is promised, but the whole body of believers, increased by the accession of converts from heathenism. “God is able,” as our Lord told the Jews, “of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”³ And since it is not permissible to efface altogether the distinction between poetry and prophecy—the psalms being historical documents and implying a certain historical situation—we must assume that an initial fulfilment of this and other prophecies had already taken place when our psalmist wrote. An accession of proselytes must already have gladdened Jewish believers, even if only on a small scale. It was a common Jewish saying in later times that a proselyte is like a new-born

¹ I put aside for the moment the disputed passage Isa. xix. 18-25.

² Isa. xliv. 2-5. Comp. the preceding Study.

³ Matt. iii. 9.

child, and our Lord alludes to this when he tells Nicodemus that "except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."¹ We find the germ of this noble phrase, so full of deep meaning to ourselves, in this old temple-hymn. Let us read the psalm. To readers who have not the key it is obscure. But to those who have already devoted some attention to the style of the psalms, and who have also a sympathy with the progressive elements in the Jewish Church, the forest-shades are pierced through and through by the rays of a summer sun.

*"His foundation on the holy mountains,
The gates of Zion Jehovah loveth
More than all the dwellings of Jacob."*

So far the psalm might have been written in the days of Josiah, who first fully carried out the principles of the great prophets by centralizing the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem. To this most pious king, as the instrument of God's purposes, we are indebted for that spirit of fervent love for the house of God which breathes in so many of the finest psalms. The psalmist continues,—

*"Glorious things are spoken of thee,
Thou city of God,"*

viz. by the prophets, such as Jeremiah and the two Isaiahs, especially the later Isaiah, from whom I have quoted one striking passage already. Then Jehovah Himself is introduced, making a solemn declaration respecting five important nations well known to the Jews. A prophetic excitement runs through the words which embody it, and renders them obscure.

*"Rahab and Babylon I mention among them that know me;
Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia—
Each one was born there!
And concerning Zion it shall be said,*

¹ John iii. 3. The Septuagint begins ver. 5 differently from our text, *Μήτηρ Σιών ἐπέε̃ ἄνθρωπος*, on which Theodoret compares Gal. iv. 26.

*'Each and every one was born in her,'
And he, the Most High, shall stablish her.
Jehovah shall reckon, when he registers the people,
'Each one was born there.'*"

Rahab, as all agree, means "pride," a name given by both Isaiahs to Egypt. Babylon is either Chaldæa, or some one of the nations which succeeded to its imperial position. "Them that know me," means "them that have entered into covenant with me"; only those can know God to whom He reveals Himself by a special covenant. "Each one was born there," in ver. 4, means each of the five nations mentioned just before. Then comes the climax in ver. 5. In the preceding verse the nations are regarded as unities, but in ver. 5 we catch a whisper of the individualizing conception of religion hinted at by Jeremiah and thoroughly expounded in the Gospel. The most glorious thing which has been spoken of the city of God (viz. by the two Isaiahs) is that there is neither Egypt nor Babylon, nor even Israel, in the great catholic Church of the future, but that of each Egyptian and Babylonian it can be said that he was regenerated or born into a new life in Zion.

There are two prophetic passages which illustrate this. One is at the end of the 19th chapter of Isaiah (vers. 24, 25):

"In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth: for that Jehovah of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

The other is in the Second Isaiah, in chap. xlv. 14,—

"Thus saith Jehovah, The gains of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to thee, and they shall be thine; . . . they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, (saying,) Surely, God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God."

These passages show that it was not a sudden lightning flash which irradiated the psalmist's mind; his insight was due to the blessing of God upon a long-continued and, if I may say so, critical study of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit had sharpened this early saint's perceptions; he passed over all those passages in which Israel from a spiritual point of view is put too high and the other nations too low, and singled out those of purest and noblest intuitions, which anticipate all but the most advanced evangelical truth. And may we not, must we not, believe—that the same blessing is waiting for us, if we will only search the Scriptures with an earnestness and a disposition to take trouble equal to that of the psalmist and his fellows? “Be very confident that the Lord has yet more light and truth to break out of His holy word”—are the words of a Nonconformist, in the old, sad days of persecution, but they are echoed by one whom all Churches and sects delight to honour, and who once ministered in my own venerable cathedral, Bishop Butler, the author of the *Analogy*.

The psalmist's insight was not perfect. Though he lived six hundred years after David, he still retained a shred of the old narrow nationalism, which for so many centuries enveloped and protected the germ of higher truth. He was still subject to one of those illusions by which God in all ages has educated His disciples, and which, by His providence, He at last safely and tenderly dispels. Few even of the psalmists could as yet have borne those far-reaching words of Christ, “The hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.”¹ Much less could the few proselytes who felt the attraction of the holy revelation of Jehovah have entered into a saying so totally opposed to the accepted ideas of

¹ John iv. 21. There were probably a few who were reaching out after this great truth (see Studies on Psalms xxiv. and lxiii.), but our psalmist was less advanced than they.

the whole non-Jewish world. A visible centre of the true religion both seemed and was necessary, so long as truth was but as a stranger and pilgrim in this lower world; nay, have we not seen that, while the forces of evil predominated greatly over the good, a similar religious centre was providentially given to the mediæval Western Church? But God was already preparing both the Jewish Church and its proselytes to do without this centre. Already synagogues had arisen—places for prayer and reading the Scriptures, which were the true predecessors of our Christian churches. And already that excessive regard for sacrifices as the only correct form of public worship was being greatly reduced by the new love for the Scriptures and for prayer—in the Second Isaiah we even find that great saying, endorsed by the Teacher of teachers, “My house shall be called (not a house of sacrifice, but) a house of prayer for all nations.”¹ So that even though the temple remained pre-eminently sacred, yet its sacredness was in some sense shared by each of those scattered houses and riverside oratories where “prayer was wont to be made.”²

But consider what faith it implied in these men of alien races to come to the puny mountain of Zion for religious instruction, and to recognise its temple as the most sacred spot upon the earth! We do not hear as much about faith in the Old Testament as in the New. But if any sacred books, or even psalms, had been specially written for proselytes, we should no doubt have found in them much kindly recognition of those heroes of faith. Later Jewish doctors admitted that Abraham their father himself was but the first of the proselytes, and who knows not those noble verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews which throw such a flood of light on the spiritual import of Abraham’s migrations?—

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, . . . went

¹ Isa. lvi. 7.

² Acts xvi. 13.

*out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own."*¹

It was just such faith when the converts from the heathen nations broke the countless ties which bound them to great and ancient religions and became the humble disciples of a poor and lowly Israelite. And what was it that made Jerusalem, in the days between Ezra and our Lord, the spiritual capital of a Church that already began to be catholic? It was a simple yet fervent doctrine of God, supported by a few great but simple historical facts. If we, reading the psalms, which are the best historical documents we have of Jewish religion after the captivity, are inexpressibly moved by the combined sweetness and power of the spirit which breathes in them, how much more must those prepared minds among the heathen which saw Jewish religion in action, have been drawn towards it as by invisible cords? The doctrine without the facts would never have attracted them. Grand as is the conception of God, the Almighty, the Allwise Creator, in the Second Isaiah, it is rather fitted to depress than to encourage, without the attendant assurance of the call of Israel to be God's favoured servant. If we could see God even afar off in that awful greatness revealed to us in the 40th chapter of Isaiah, "the spirit would fail before Him, and the souls that He hath made."² But when the prophet adds to this revelation of God as the Creator, that of Jehovah who hath "called his servant Israel in righteousness," and will "hold his hand, and keep him," and will "set him for a light of the nations, to become God's salvation unto the ends of the earth,"³ then a strange new feeling of reverent love comes upon the sympathetic reader. And so must it have been in antiquity. Awe at the infinite power of Israel's holy God must have become softened into humble filial trust. And if we turn back to that passage in the Second Isaiah which

¹ Heb. xi. 8, 9.

² Isa. lvii. 16.

³ Isa. xlii. 6, xlix. 6.

I quoted before, we find that the Gentile converts who at first fall down before Israel with the half-superstitious prayer, "Surely God is in thee," rise in the next verse to the perception that the one true God, the Almighty, is also a Saviour, able and willing to deliver those who put their trust in Him.¹

But there is a still higher interest attaching to this beautiful psalm. It is not only a historical document, illustrating the progress of our mother the Jewish Church, it is a virtual prophecy—more strictly, it is a lyric reflexion of earlier prophetic pictures—of the Church of the latter days. It foreshadows the gradual expansion of the original Jewish Christian Church into a catholic Church of many divers races, fraternally united in Jesus Christ. "*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*"² These are the words of an apostle of Christ. They are anticipated by the prophets and by the psalmists. Yes; there is a germ, though only a germ, in our psalm of the conception of corporate and yet personal union with Christ which we find in St. Paul. Each of the five foreign nations spoken of in ver. 4 were, or should be, born again, says the psalm, to a higher life in and through Zion. But in the next verse we are told that besides this each member of these several nations should, in his individual capacity, be born again in and through Zion. This brings us, as I have said, very close to the declaration of Christ to Nicodemus, and it suggests that the true theory of the Church had already loomed on the horizon of this Hebrew saint. Only those who have themselves laid hold on the Saviour can unite together in the Church of the redeemed. In short, we receive the grace of the Spirit, as individual human beings, and not in virtue of belonging to a nation or to a

¹ Isa. xlv. 14, 15.

² Rom. x. 12, 13.

Church by the accident of birth. How all-important this truth is! A great preacher, of long experience, especially among the educated classes, has said, that "there are men who are tossed all their lives on a sea of misgiving and perplexity, for want of a real new birth."¹ Nominally indeed we are all "children of the kingdom," but really, unless we live and act as citizens of Zion, how can it be said of us that we have been "born there"? "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" There is a fleshly, natural religion, and there is a spiritual, supernatural religion; and unless we know in an increasing degree what this latter means, it is only too doubtful whether we have ever really been born in Zion. And if any one refers me to the psalmist in justification of his want of assurance on this point, I reply that the psalmist's words on Jehovah's registering of the regenerate ought to be supplemented by those which I have quoted from the Second Isaiah, who distinctly says, that the proof that we are of the spiritual Israel is given by ourselves. "*One shall say, 'I am Jehovah's,' and another shall even (as a willing slave) write upon his hand, 'Jehovah's.'*" In other words, he whose one aim in life is to obey God's law from love and in the strength of the Spirit of Christ may be sure that He who registers both nations and individuals will say, when "the books are opened," This man was born there. Let us each ask ourselves therefore, Is this my single aim? Do I serve God from love, or—which is the germ of this happy state,—earnestly and constantly desire to do so? If it is, what should make me afraid?

"To love Thee, Saviour, is to be
Cheerful and brave and strong and free,
Calm as a rock 'mid striving seas,
Certain 'mid all uncertainties."²

I have said that the true theory of the Church had

¹ Dean Vaughan.

² Miss Macready, *Devotional Lays*.

loomed on the horizon of the psalmist. Certainly the idea which he had formed of it was not a logically accurate one. The order of vers. 4 and 5 suggests that nations are in some sense brought into the city of God before individuals. This is in accordance with the religious development of ancient Israel, in which the corporate sense of spiritual life preceded the individual. The normal course in evangelical Christendom is different. We are saved as individuals, but our salvation is incomplete until we share a common and united life with our brethren. Indeed, the very first impulse of the saved soul is to seek the society of those who have been "in Christ" before him. They have need of him, and he has even more need of them. Such is God's appointment. "He that findeth his life shall lose it." Not individual but social happiness is the end set before us by our Redeemer—social happiness which cannot be complete as long as one of our fellow men is a stranger to it, or seeks it in false ways—social happiness which means the combination of all God's human children in the delighted service of their heavenly Father. And of this combined life the natural type is the city. A Hebrew psalmist may speak of Jerusalem as the type, but this is only because the capital of the post-exile Church seemed to him, by a pardonable illusion, to be a model city, and because he knew that Jerusalem (that is, the Church which dwelt there) was, for the good of the world, as "the apple of the eye" to Jehovah.¹ Long afterwards, a saintly non-Christian philosopher (M. Aurelius) speaks in full sympathy with prophets and apostles, of the world itself as the city of God—he too had learned that the object for which man was made was that social life of mutual help and common obedience to the laws of God, of which the city is the type.

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God," says our psalmist. It is God's own "foundation upon

¹ Zech. ii. 8.

the holy mountains." Jerusalem's girdle of hills is to his sharpened perceptions a symbol of the heavenly heights, and of that love-directed strength which is more durable than the heaven itself. But the glory of Zion would be incomplete, unless the "city of God" were also the city of the world. Not that all individuality is to be crushed out of the non-Jewish nations, any more than we desire this for the infant Churches of India and Africa for which English lives have been so freely spent. National differences are to continue in the "city of God," but these differences will cease to be divisive; the union of the federated peoples is to be not less close than that of the several quarters of the "well-compacted" city—Jerusalem.¹ In short, the Catholic Church is to become identical with that human race for which in due time Christ died, and the primary work both of the national Churches and of each of their members is so to commend the principles of the city of God, that every child of man may eagerly embrace the new citizenship.

Is the task hard? Too hard indeed it is for human strength; not the greatest of political philosophers has been able to counteract sin, and devise a perfect, moral city-life. Feeling this, noble-minded dreamers have bidden us return to nature, and make it our aim to restore the idyllic conditions of the garden of Eden. But we "have not so learned Christ." He has called us to shrink from no task because it is hard, for "*I am with you,*" saith He, "*all the days*" (words of sweetest comfort for tired workers); that is, "I am the master-builder of the new Jerusalem." In remote antiquity (said a Greek myth, true in idea, if not in fact) the walls of the city of Thebes rose to the divine music

¹ Cf. Rev. xxi. 3, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be *his peoples*"; and ver. 24, "And *the nations* shall walk amidst the light thereof" (*viz.* of the holy city). See Revised Version.

of Orpheus. But "our highest Orpheus" (as an English prophet of the latter days has finely said) "walked in Judæa, eighteen-hundred years ago: his sphere-melody, flowing in wild native tones, took captive the ravished souls of men."¹

"A simple reed by Syrian waters found
From human lips took a celestial sound:
Through it strange melodies our Shepherd blew,
And wondering, wistful ones around Him drew.

Of heavenly love, with cadence deep it told,
Of labours long to win them to the fold,
Of bleeding feet upon the mountains steep,
And life laid down to save the erring sheep.

O loving Shepherd, to that gracious strain
We listen and we listen once again;
And while its music sinks into our heart,
Our fears grow fainter and our doubts depart."²

Gracious strain, indeed! Without it, how should the "prisoned soul" burst the bonds of sin and fly to join other kindred spirits in building up the fair city of God? But, as our English prophet says again, "being of a truth sphere-melody, (it) still flows and sounds, though now with thousandfold accompaniments, and rich symphonies, through all our hearts; and modulates, and divinely leads them." And though, if we look at its performance, that union of Christian hearts which we call the Church has produced comparatively little that is worthy of the supernatural glory of its origin, yet, if we look at its promise with eyes sharpened by the Spirit of Christ, we can discern, underneath the pettiness, and the prejudice, and the folly, and even the sin, which mar the Church's record, bright gleams and sometimes as it were tropical outbursts of heavenly light and love which are the reflexion of the gates of pearl and the golden streets. The seer of Patmos

¹ Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii., chap. viii.

² Wilton, *Lyrics Sylvan and Sacred*.

"saw the holy city Jerusalem coming down new out of heaven."¹ This is a form of expression highly characteristic of Hebrew idealism. We perhaps may with equal justice think of the new Jerusalem as fashioned in the course of the ages upon this our earth, and then, for its "perfect consummation and bliss," transported into that ideal world, where the boldest aspirations are the most fully realized and the strongest faith receives the largest reward. Just as we say that Christ's Church must, in spite of appearances, possess unity, because He asked for it, so we must believe that the City of which the Church is, under Christ, the builder is growing in heavenliness as the years roll on, and that we are surely and swiftly moving towards that great dedication-festival, when, in the words of the psalmists, we shall "sing unto the Lord a new song,"² and when,—

*"They that sing as well as they that dance (shall say),
All my fountains (of life, and joy, and peace) are in thee
(O Zion)."*³

Then shall we indeed, according to that fine primitive use of the phrase, celebrate our true "birthday," wherein we, with "the nations of them that are saved," shall be delivered for ever from temptation and sin and sorrow, and be "born again" into the perfect life.

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DR. HATCH'S "ESSAYS IN BIBLICAL GREEK."

WHATEVER differences of opinion there may be as to the value of Dr. Hatch's contributions to ecclesiastical history, there is likely to be none as to the value of this contribution to biblical scholarship. The book, indeed, has a certain

¹ Rev. xxi. 2 (R.V. marg.). ² Ps. xcvi. 1; cf. Rev. v. 9. ³ Ps. lxxxvii. 7, R.V.