

three conspicuous passages in which St. Paul asserts, or at least seems to assert, that the future punishment of sin will be ruin, utter and hopeless and final. In our next paper we shall consider other passages in which the great Apostle speaks of a universal purpose of salvation.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.

*THE TWENTY-SIXTH AND TWENTY-EIGHTH
PSALMS.*

THE 26th and the 28th are twin-psalms, and reflect light upon each other. You might imagine that in the first verse of the former the Church, which is the speaker, says more than it can justify, and that its rash self-confidence will sustain a fall. For there are two kinds of self-confidence. One belongs to the man who says that he can do without God, because in the depths of his nature there are inexhaustible springs of strength and happiness; another to him who says, "I trust in the Lord without wavering," without having learned in the school of the Holy Spirit what this rare experience means. To do the psalmist—that is, the Jewish Church—justice, we want to see how his profession wore. The 28th Psalm may enable us to do so. Anxious as the times were in which the 26th Psalm was written, a deepening gloom is manifest at the first glance in the 28th. If the Church's confidence is still maintained, it will be a proof that the words of Psalm xxvi. 1 are no exaggeration. But before we lovingly examine the expressions of the 28th Psalm—expressions which are as much a historical document as any chronicle could be,—let us seek to realize the situation portrayed in the earlier psalm. In vers. 9 and 10 we read,

*“Take not away my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with men of blood :
In whose hands is mischief,
And their right hand is full of bribes.”*

Certainly these words were not written under a summer sky ; storm and tempest were coming up from the horizon. The psalmist lived during one of the darker parts of the period between Ezra and the Maccabees.¹ He and his fellow believers were surrounded by openly ungodly men, partly, as other kindred psalms show, foreign tyrants (for the Persians were not always kind to their Jewish subjects), partly traitorous Israelites, not less tyrannical than the Persians, whose hands were stained with the blood of their innocent victims. These false Jews, as we can see from vers. 5 and 6, had given up the habit of worshipping the true God in the temple, and met together in “congregations” of their own, not for worship, but to plan fresh outrages on the defenceless servants of Jehovah. Ver. 4 further mentions “dissemblers” or hypocrites, who would fain have been admitted to the confidence of the righteous, but whose treacherous wiles were seen through by the sharp-sighted psalmist. The Church has full confidence in the just judgment of God, which, though as yet delayed, will surely be “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.” “Take not away my soul with sinners,” she cries, “when thou comest.” But when Psalm xxviii. was composed, the peril of true believers had become still greater ; and unless the Divine Judge soon appears, the true Israel will become (so the first verse declares) “*like those that have gone down into the pit.*” Bitter imprecations force their way to the lips of these much-tried saints. Not content with praying to be set on the right hand of the Judge,

¹ The “anointed” spoken of in Ps. xxviii. 8 is probably the high priest. Cf. Lev. iv. 3, 5.

they assume the character of His assessors, and call for the immediate punishment of the evil-doers.

*“ Give them according to their work,
And according to the evil of their doings :
Give them after the operation of their hands ;
Render to them their deserts.”*

Dare we praise—can we blame them? Our Lord has said, “ Judge not, that ye be not judged,” and in their overwrought feelings these Jewish Churchmen both judged and condemned. And yet had they not a strong excuse? Here and there, outside the land of Israel, a true though faint light may have shone from heaven ; but such heathen as the Jews at this time knew were offenders against the primal laws of morality, while their Jewish helpers were alike untrue to their nationality and their religion. And if we survey the scene from the point of view of history, is it not plain that, had the effort to crush Israel been successful, the prophecies of salvation could not, humanly speaking, have been fulfilled, and the Christ could not have come? The nobler Israelites had more than a dim perception of this. They were aware of the spiritual mission entrusted to them ; “ who,” they said to Jehovah, “ will give thee thanks in the pit” (*i.e.* in Hades)? Can we wonder then, that, as the darkness closed about them, they became dismayed, alike for Israel (for they were patriots¹) and for the deposit of true religion of which Israel was the shrine?

And yet true believers, true Churchmen, however dismayed, were not entirely without hope. They still ventured to call Jehovah “ my rock,” “ my stronghold,” “ my shield,” some of those consecrated symbolic words which abound in the psalms, and which imply so firm a faith in the invisible. By addressing God thus under such circumstances, they fully justified the claim which they had shortly before advanced, of “ trusting in Jehovah without wavering” ; and

¹ In the sense in which Nehemiah was a patriot (Neh. ii. 3).

the more we study the 28th Psalm, the more we shall be convinced that the professions of its fellow psalm were but the literal statement of inward spiritual facts.

But some one may ask, Would not the psalm be more perfect without any claims or professions at all? To God the very secrets of the heart are all open. True, but the essence of prayer is free communion with God: "Pour out your heart before him." Prayer is not merely asking for things; it is the converse of friend with Friend. And since we cannot but examine ourselves whether we have been faithful to our covenant with God, why should we be hindered from telling Him how, as we think, we stand with Him? "If our heart condemn us not," then, as St. John says, "we have confidence toward God";¹ and if our heart condemn us, then, I suppose, the natural thing is to tell God of this, and to appeal to the provision made in the covenant for our cleansing from all unrighteousness. The condensed and purified extract of the devotions of the Latin Church supplied in the collects is by no means without appeals to the comparative purity of the Church's conscience. I willingly admit that these appeals display a more developed spirituality than is found in Psalms xxvi. and xxviii. It is plain that those who wrote the collects laid somewhat more stress on the general tone of the character than on the particular details of practice. And accordingly Christians trained in their school may find it hard to sympathise with negative statements like those in vers. 4 and 5 of Psalm xxvi.; even positive statements they will probably make with much reluctance, a conscience sharpened by the Spirit of Christ being naturally predisposed to humble confessions of failure. Still a Christian who reads the Bible historically as well as devotionally may admire the first part of Psalm xxvi. for its childlike simplicity. And though the views of duty opened by nineteen

¹ 1 John iii. 21.

Christian centuries may be deeper than those of the psalmist, yet we have not outgrown, and never shall outgrow, the need of a child-like spirit. A too introspective religion would not be conducive either to our growth in grace or to the success of our work; but never to examine ourselves as to our performance of particular duties would show that we were careless of the approval of our Father, and forgetful of the solemn condition attached to Christ's parting promise, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*"¹

But let us give some attention to the details of the child-like professions of the psalmist. The same Holy Spirit who taught the apostles taught him; and, making due allowance for different circumstances, the words which the psalmist wrote for the Jewish Church cannot be without a message for the Christian. "*I walk still in my integrity,*" he says. It is no trifle for any one to be able to say this when Providence seems to be on the side of the ungodly. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?"² said Job's wife to him when an awful disease—the type of sin—came upon that model of ancient virtue. And even now the tempter puts this question to many a struggling Christian in the vortex of modern life. Is it not worth while to learn how a Jewish saint resisted such a temptation? Now read the second half of the first verse, "*I trust in Jehovah without wavering.*" This means, I am sure, that (in the words of the collect) they who do lean only upon the hope of God's heavenly grace will (in ways unknown to man) evermore be defended by His mighty power.³

The next profession of the psalmist is equally suitable for an earnest Christian.

*"For thy lovingkindness is ever before my eyes;
And I have walked in thy truthfulness."*

¹ John xv. 7.

² Job ii. 9.

³ Collect for fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

“Thy lovingkindness”; he might simply have said, “Thou, O God.” For of course he means the same thing as another psalmist who declares, “I have set Jehovah always before me.”¹ But he wishes to convey a deep lesson to the Church. Would there be any comfort in directing our thoughts continually towards God unless we had learned with St. John, and with the psalmist, that God is Love? We studied the meaning of God’s lovingkindness not long since, and saw that it had reference to the gracious covenant, given with a view to man’s salvation, and known, however imperfectly, even to the Jewish Church. To have God’s lovingkindness² ever before one’s eyes is to look to Him alone for all blessings, both temporal and spiritual, for food, for shelter, for guidance, for moral instruction, and, most important of all to frail and tempted man, for conversion and forgiveness. And which conception of God is dearest to the psalmist after that of His lovingkindness? His truthfulness.³ The two expressions are almost synonymous; they represent different aspects of the same attribute: God loves us, and being ever true to Himself, He is truthful or faithful to us, that is, to His covenant for our salvation. And so that beautiful little anthem which we call Psalm cxvii. says,—

“O praise Jehovah, all ye nations;

Laud him, all ye peoples.

For his lovingkindness is mighty over us,

And the truthfulness of Jehovah endureth for ever.”

The thought of Him who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever” may well exercise a transforming influence on the heart, and form, as it were, a spiritual atmosphere, in which the believer can walk, unhurt by the poisonous

¹ Ps. xvi. 8.

² St. Augustine, misled by the *miser cordia* of the Vulgate, sees an allusion to the narrow escape of the sinner from the consuming fire.

³ See Exod. xxxiv. 6 (cf. Num. xiv. 18), where the proclamation of the Divine name includes the title, “rich in lovingkindness and truthfulness” (or, truth).

vapours around him. "I have walked," says the psalmist, "in thy truthfulness." And if the believer distrusts his own ability to do this, then let him say with another psalmist, "Guide me in thy truthfulness, and teach me";¹ and again, "Send forth thy light and thy truthfulness, that they may lead me."²

Next come the negative professions :

*"I have not sat with vain (i.e. good-for nothing) persons ;
Neither have I fellowship with dissemblers.
I hate the congregation of evil-doers,
Neither will I sit with the wicked."*

We can hardly imagine a Christian putting these matters into the foreground of his prayer, at least in ordinary circumstances. But take the case of a recent convert from heathenism in Africa, exposed to danger from persecution. How natural it would be for him to adopt the language of our psalmist, or to say, in the words of the 16th psalm,—

*"As for the saints that are in the land,
And thy noble ones, all my delight is in them" !*

For when all around tempts a man to palter with his conscience, and a false god is enthroned in the place of Jehovah, the only safety, unless duty compels us to be aggressive, is in fleeing from occasions of unfaithfulness. A man's company becomes in such circumstances the test of his piety. And this is why in the first psalm, written while there was still great danger to the Church from heathenism, we read,—

*"Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of
the wicked,*

*Nor stood in the way of sinners,
And hath not sat in the seat of the scornful ;
But his delight is in the law of Jehovah,
And on his law doth he meditate day and night."*

¹ Ps. xxv. 5.

² Ps. xliii. 3.

Plainly, this passage contains a more balanced description of a righteous character than the 26th psalm. The good man withdraws from the company of scoffers and unbelievers to delight himself in the inspired teaching of the Scriptures. But though the 26th Psalm does not express an antithesis to sitting with the vain and the ungodly, the context enables us to supply one for ourselves. This is how the psalmist continues,—

*“ I wash mine hands in innocency ;
And (so) would I compass thine altar, Jehovah :
That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell out all thy wonders.”*

He longs to take part one day in a great religious procession, such as we find described in the 68th Psalm—a procession enlivened with happy songs of thanksgiving to a Saviour-God. In short, he gives up the “ congregation of evil-doers ” for a far better society—that of his fellow worshippers in the temple, and, above all, of the gracious God, who in some sense dwells there.

*“ Jehovah (he says), I love the habitation of thy house,
And the place where thy glory dwelleth.”*

For the temple is now the sacramental sign of Jehovah's presence. Between the exalted idealism to which some of the prophets inclined, and according to which temple and sacrifices were alike unworthy of Jehovah, and the inherited superstition of a literal Divine inhabiting of the sanctuary on Mount Zion, a compromise, more suitable than either belief to the wants of ordinary Jewish nature, was suggested to the leaders of the Jewish Church. It is beautifully expressed in a passage in the first book of Kings,—

*“ But will God in very deed dwell on the earth ? behold,
heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; how
much less this house that I have builded ! Yet . . .
hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy*

people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place : yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place : and when thou hearest, forgive." ¹

Our psalmist fully believes this ; namely, that if he prays (to use an expression in the 28th Psalm) " towards the innermost part of the sanctuary," ² *i.e.* towards the most holy place, his prayer will assuredly be answered. And see, his simple faith in God's appointed sign is rewarded. His recent crushing anxiety gives place to a joyous faith in the tendance of His people by the Good Shepherd. ³

" Blessed be Jehovah !

For he has heard the voice of my supplication.

Jehovah is my stronghold and my shield ;

My heart trusted in him, and I was helped :

Therefore my heart danceth for joy,

And with my song will I praise him."

This is how he speaks in the 28th psalm. In the 26th he is calmer, but not less confident. "*My foot standeth on even ground,*" he says ; that is, after stumbling along on the rough paths of affliction, I can walk at ease in a " wealthy place " ; and he adds,—

" In the assemblies (or choirs) will I bless Jehovah " :

for his joys and sorrows are those of the Church, and as he complained and lamented with his brethren, so with them he will sing and give thanks.

There is still one of the psalmist's professions to be studied. I have already quoted the striking symbolic words, "*I wash mine hands*" (he says) "*in innocency*" (Ps. xxvi. 6). How impossible it is to do without primitive forms of expression ! The ceremonial washings of heathenism were supposed to have an inherent power to purify from sin. Nowhere are they more prevalent than in Japan, where Shintoism has the unique peculiarity of substituting such

¹ 1 Kings viii. 27-30.

² Ps. xxviii. 2 ; cf. v. 7.

³ See Ps. xxviii. 9.

lustrations for sacrificial offerings. Japan, then, may at least help us to realize the force of this passage. When a Shinto worshipper approaches the shrine, he dips, we are told, with a bamboo cup, enough water to pour over his hands and cleanse his mouth, and having done this, ventures to ascend the steps and make his petition. Ancient Palestine too was no stranger to these rites. The Gospel narratives show us that ceremonial washings, or baptisms, as they are called,¹ assumed a great importance in the time of Christ, but were performed in a formalistic spirit. There is no trace of such formalism however in the inspired psalmist. To him lustrations have no more inherent power of moral cleansing than sacrifices had according to the 50th and 51st psalms. If notwithstanding he performs them, he will take good care not to miss the thing signified: he will wash his hands in innocency; that is, he will keep them free from sins—from the heinous sins referred to in Psalm xxvi. 9, 10. An easy thing, perhaps you will say, for the persecuted Jews; for sins of violence belong to the oppressors and not to the oppressed. True; but remember that the speaker is virtually the Jewish people, which was not always either “clean of hands” or “pure of heart.” Not only its greatest king (David), but its most prominent and religious citizens, had been guilty of the sin of murder,² which to pious Israelites seemed to pollute their land with an indelible stain.

“*Deliver me from blood-guiltiness* (says the Church in the 51st psalm), *Jehovah my Saviour-God;*

And my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness.”

It was no small thing that Israel had now purged itself from this awful guilt, and could describe its religious ideal in the searching catechism (Ps. xxiv. 3, 4), which we studied last month, and which contradicts so emphatically

¹ See the Greek of Mark vii. 4, Heb. ix. 10.

² Cf. Isa. i. 15, lix. 3; Mic. iii. 10; Ps. v. 6, etc.

the antique heathen conception of what a recent writer has called "practical religion."¹

And is there not a special fitness in the mention of this symbolic washing just before the psalmist's longing to take part in a solemn Church rite? Many of us have doubtless heard of the great Mysteries at Eleusis, which were the most sacred part of the Greek religion, and in the most spiritual minds produced something like what we are accustomed to call sanctification. These Mysteries opened with a proclamation that murderers and other impious persons should depart, and with solemn lustrations performed by the devout who remained. I mention these purifications here, because the Mysteries were in a certain sense a great Church rite, and analogous therefore to the procession longed for by the psalmist. This ancient Israelite felt, like the noblest of the Greeks, that without inward purity it was presumptuous to join the band of the initiated. To sing Jehovah's praises was in his view an action equal in dignity to the offering of sacrifice; nay, it was better than hecatombs of oxen, for, as Jehovah says in another psalm,

*"Thinkest thou that I will eat bulls' flesh,
And drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God thanksgiving,
And pay thy vows unto the most Highest."*²

What a serious preparation then ought to precede this solemn act! White robes are given in the vision of the

¹ Mr. Grant Allen, in the article which bears this title (*Fortnightly Review*, Dec., 1889), takes no account of the regeneration of the religious sentiment by Christ and His forerunners. Ps. xxiv. 3, 4 does not stand alone. Comp. Pss. xv. and lxxiii., where "Israel" is synonymously parallel to "the pure in heart." The view of these passages and of Ps. li. given above may seem to conflict with a striking paragraph in Dean Church's argument in favour of the Divine guidance of the Israelites (see his *Lectures on the Psalms*). It does conflict with the letter, but not with the spirit of that paragraph. The Dean writes as if the Psalms were all of one very early period, or as if the moral character of the Israelites had no phases to pass through. The Psalms equally prove the Divine guidance of Israel when studied upon different critical principles.

² Ps. l. 13, 14, Prayer-Book Version.

Apocalypse to those who sing the great hymn of salvation.¹ And so the psalmist will wash his hands in innocency, not once only, but continually, before taking part in the Church's ritual of solemn thanksgiving. Must we not apply this to ourselves? All healthy Christian churches follow that of Israel in the prominence which they give to praise, and their children should take the psalmist's lesson to their heart of hearts. And if the Jewish Church in the 26th Psalm looks forward to a day of solemn rejoicing, when its deadly enemies shall have been crushed, have not all truly living members of the Christian Church in England an equal longing for a great future thanksgiving-day? For our Church too is surrounded by enemies. That which we value more than life is trampled under foot by thousands of our fellow countrymen. The ignorant and the vicious are as truly, however unconsciously, our enemies as those persecutors were the enemies of the Jewish Church. Only we do not, like the psalmist, call down God's judgment upon those who are without. We have learned from Christ to despair of no one. The destruction we pray for is not that of sinners, but of sin. We have to add much in thought even to the more missionary psalms to make them full expressions of our spiritual aims. Let us see to it however that we fall not behind the Jewish Church in our zeal for personal purity. It is true that we cannot, strictly speaking, purify ourselves. The initial act of purification is Christ's. But for those who are justified by faith there still remains a long and earnest process to be carried out in the power of that baptism—the daily subjugation of the flesh, the daily striving onwards and upwards, the daily endeavour to walk in the blessed steps of His most holy life. A Church whose members so purified themselves could not have long to wait for the happy completion of its home-missionary work, and would

¹ Rev. vii. 9.

be able to devote itself without distraction to the ever-broadening task of the conquest of the world for God. Blessed is he that followeth after purity, not merely for his personal salvation, but for the share that is given him in the travail of Christ's soul.

T. K. CHEYNE.

*OUR LORD'S FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE
FEAST OF TABERNACLES.*

(JOHN VII. 11-29.)

IN the record which St. John has preserved of our Lord's public teachings at Jerusalem we find scarcely any of His long or connected discourses, but rather such conversational discussions as serve to bring out His relations to the several parties into which the people were divided. It is a report of free and casual talk which the fourth gospel gives us, not a reproduction of formal instruction. The object is, not so much to tell us what Jesus preached, as to let us see how Jesus' preaching told on this or that section of His countrymen—how they received it, and what they did in consequence of it. In this way the evangelist works out, with something like dramatic skill, the steps of that tremendous tragedy. With sustained though simple power the development of Jewish enmity is traced, and the deepening of the plot around the Christ. Each incident helps on the action; priests and people, friend and traitor, Caiaphas and Nicodemus, all play their several parts before us, till in Pilate's hall and on Golgotha the interest culminates and the tragedy is consummated.

In the passage now before us, the purpose of the evangelist seems to be to bring out the relation of parties to Jesus at the opening of a new chapter in the history, and to do