

were not to go himself to Jerusalem, but to send letters of introduction with their messengers; though he might possibly go himself, as it were by an after-thought (1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4), and again in xvi. 6 he says: "That ye may set me forward on my journey whithersoever I go," as if it were as yet undetermined. Yet if 1 Corinthians was written at the date usually assigned, and the sending of Timothy there referred to were the same as that mentioned in Acts xix., this was written after his solemn resolution to go to Jerusalem had been made. But when the earlier date for 1 Corinthians is adopted, the chronology falls into its place, and there is harmony instead of contradiction; for it then becomes clear that 1 Corinthians was written before this solemn purpose was formed, and while the Apostle was still uncertain whether he would visit Rome or Jerusalem first.

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### *THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SECOND PSALM.*

THE Second Psalm may be described both as easy and as difficult. Its structure is simple, the four parts into which it is divided are easily distinguished, and it is easy to trace a single chain of thought running through the whole Psalm. The first part (*vv.* 1-3) describes the rising of the heathen against the Lord's Anointed, the second (*vv.* 4-6) prophesies the interposition of the Lord on his behalf, the third (*vv.* 7-9) reveals the Lord's decree that the heathen are to be subject to His Anointed, the fourth (*vv.* 10-12) warns the heathen to escape wrath by submitting to the decree.

On the other hand this Psalm has been felt to contain important difficulties, and in two places at least (*גִּילוי* *v.* 11, and *נִשְׁקוּ בָר* *v.* 12) the text has been declared with some confidence to be corrupt. The existence of these difficulties

and the great interest attaching to the Psalm will perhaps excuse a fresh attempt to interpret it.

It is freely recognised by commentators that the recognition of the fourfold division of this Psalm is one great help to its interpretation. I believe, however, that a second great help, nowhere recognised as far as I know, is to be found in the fourfold occurrence of one key-note in the Psalm, slightly varied in expression in each division. Thus we have

- I. (v. 2) "The [Lord's] Anointed."
- II. (v. 6) "My king." (The Lord is the speaker.)
- III. (v. 7) "My son" (בְּנִי).
- IV. (v. 12) "One who is a Son" (בֶּרֶךְ).

I. In the first division of the Psalm nothing is clearer than that the stress falls on the words, "Against the Lord and against His Anointed." They interrupt the flow of the parallelism and are plainly thrust in as embodying a vigorous protest and as revealing a startling truth; the rebellion is against *the Lord's Anointed!*

- v. 1. "Why are nations assembled together,  
"And tribes imagine a vain thing?"
- v. 2. "Why do kings of the earth set themselves,  
"And rulers take counsel together?  
(*It is against the Lord and against His Anointed!*)
- v. 3. "Saying, Let us break their bands,  
"And cast from us their cords!"

II. In the second division the key-note is struck in the words, "My king." The expression is startling when put into the mouth of the Lord Himself; it arrests the attention more than anything else in the division. The deliberation with which it is uttered deepens its impressiveness. For a time Jehovah waits in silence. He "laughs" and "mocks" the enemy, *i.e.* He allows their evil plans to develop and permits them to imagine that they are on the eve of success. *Then* (and not till then) He *speaks*, reveals

Himself in His wrath to their utter discomfiture, and the decisive blow is in the declaration that the sovereign against whom they have rebelled is *Jehovah's king*. No wonder that the apostles applied this Psalm to the death and resurrection of our Lord!

- v. 4. "He that dwelleth in the heavens laugheth,<sup>1</sup>  
 "The Lord mocketh them.  
 v. 5. "Then (*i.e.* at last) shall he speak to them in his anger,  
 "And in his wrath terrify them:  
 v. 6. "Saying, Though I myself have set my king  
 "Upon Zion my holy mount . . . !" <sup>2</sup>

III. In the third division the psalmist takes up the thought suggested in the second by the expression, "My king," and explains it. The psalmist's king is Jehovah's king because he is Jehovah's son and vicegerent; he is Jehovah's son, having been begotten on the very day of trial. God's deliverance of the king vindicates for him a place not only as God's king but also as God's son. The heathen are given to the king as though to the heir; they are his to break or to spare. The key-note of the third division is, "My son."

- v. 7. "I will tell of a decree:<sup>3</sup>  
 "The Lord said unto me,  
 "My son art thou,  
 "I this day have begotten thee!  
 v. 8. "Ask of me,  
 "And I will give thee nations for thine inheritance,  
 "And the ends of the earth for thy possession.  
 v. 9. "Thou mayest break (*or* rule) them with a sceptre of iron,  
 "Thou mayest dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

IV. In the fourth division of the Psalm we naturally expect that the keynote of the first three will be struck

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* abstains (for the present) from action; cp. Ps. xxxvii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> An aposiopesis; some expression such as "yet ye creatures of earth rebel" is understood, but not expressed.

<sup>3</sup> *Lit.* of that which is a *decree* (*i.e.* a declaration raised to the power of a law).

again, and (as before) with some variation in the expression used. Now if we follow the interpretation of the Peshitta, Jerome, Ibn Ezra and the A.V., we are not disappointed. In the last verse of the Psalm—a suitable place for the repetition of the keynote—we meet the words, “Kiss a son,” *i.e.* “Make your submission to One who is a Son.”<sup>1</sup>

The words combined with the contents of *v.* 11 form a strikingly appropriate conclusion to the Psalm. The nations (*v.* 2) had been guilty of a twofold rebellion: *against the Lord and against His Anointed.* In *vv.* 11, 12 they are invited to make a twofold submission: *Serve the Lord with fear . . . make your submission to One who is a Son.*

Surely an interpretation which gives so suitable an ending to the whole Psalm should be accepted, unless it offends either against grammar or against the true sense of the words used. No objection can be raised on the first ground: *בר נשקו* is grammatically correct for “Kiss a Son.” On the second ground, however, the objection has been made that it is very unlikely that the same writer would employ the Hebrew word *בני* (“my son”) in *v.* 7, and the Aramaising word *בר* (“a son”) in *v.* 12. The difficulty is a real one, but surely not fatal, even if we can show no reason for the change of word. Inconsistencies of diction of a similar kind are not unknown in good writers. But I think that a probable reason can be given for the change from the Hebrew *בני* of *v.* 7 to the Aramaising *בר* of *v.* 12. The heathen who rise against the Lord’s Anointed are no doubt in the main *Aramæans*; hence the Psalmist in his warning to them changes for greater effect the *בני* (“my Son”) which embodies the essence of the decree into the *בר* (“a Son”) of their own language.<sup>2</sup> Coming in the

<sup>1</sup> For the use of an anarthrous substantive compare *v.* 7 (“a decree”). The kiss of homage is mentioned 1 Kings xix. 18, and Hosea xiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the warning in Aramaic to idolaters (Jer. x. 11).

midst of pure Hebrew, it falls, as no doubt it was meant to fall, with a hammer-like stroke.

Still, even if the explanation of the change of word given above be rejected and no other be forthcoming, the interpretation, "Submit yourselves to One who is a Son," remains superior to all rival interpretations hitherto given, for no other interpretation so fitly gathers together the threads at the close of the Psalm.

- v. 10. "And now, O kings, be wise,  
 "Receive instruction, ye judges of earth !
- v. 11. "Serve Jehovah with fear,  
 "And rejoice (*i.e.* keep his feasts) <sup>1</sup> with trembling.
- v. 12. "Kiss one who is a son,  
 "Lest he be angry,  
 "And ye perish on your way,  
 "For otherwise in a little while his wrath will consume [you].  
 "Blessed are all they who seek refuge in him !"

One word remains to be said. This Psalm is Messianic, whether the translation "Kiss a Son" be retained or not. I do not mean that the Psalm is a literal prediction, *i.e.* a history written beforehand of the humiliation and triumph of our Lord, but that it is a statement of the same eternal principles of Divine activity as those which governed the earthly mission of the Christ. So immutable are those principles, that it is possible to say that an outline of the History of Redemption is indeed shadowed forth in the psalm. The four great characteristics of the crisis therein described reappear in the pages of the Evangelists: the hostility of the world-powers, the silent forbearance of God, His eventual vindication of His earthly representative, and the summons to all to submit to Him. I call the psalm Messianic because it is adapted for showing the Jew of the Apostolic age that, in the broadest sense, Christ came *not to destroy but to fulfil*.

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. Zech. xiv. 16.