

*THE METHOD OF STUDYING THE PSALTER.*

PSALM XL.

THIS Psalm consists of two parts, differing widely in character and tone. The first part (*vv.* 1–12) is marked by vigour and originality of expression; the second part (*vv.* 13–17) is constructed largely of conventional phrases; it occurs also, with slight textual variations, as a separate Psalm (Ps. lxx.). In the first part, the predominant thoughts are those of gratitude for deliverance, and of spiritual service; in the second part the Psalmist is beset by foes, and prays earnestly for speedy deliverance.

The occasion of the Psalm we do not know: but the case is one in which the contents of the Psalm speak so plainly that, if we did know it, we should hardly understand the Psalm better. It is certainly much later than the age of David.

The Psalmist begins by describing the danger he had been in, and how after patient waiting upon God, he had been rescued from it—

- 1 I waited waitingly for<sup>r</sup> Jehovah;  
and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.  
2 And he brought me up out of the roaring pit,<sup>1</sup> out of the miry clay;  
and set my feet upon a crag, making firm my goings.

In *v.* 2 he compares himself to a person sinking in a watery pit, or floundering in a morass, where his feet had

<sup>1</sup> 'Horrible' (P.B.V., A.V., R.V.) is a paraphrase; ׀נשׁ cannot by any possibility mean 'horrible.' Elsewhere ׀נשׁ is a stronger synonym of ׀נח, and means a *din*, or what we call a *roar*—of the waves or a great host of men (Isa. xvii. 12b, 13 [R.V. *rushing*], xiii. 4 [R.V. *tumult*], Ps. lxxv. 7 [R.V. *roaring*]), or the *uproar* (R.V.m. *tumult*) of a gay city (Isa. v. 14); or the *din* or *crash* of battle (Am. ii. 2; Hos. x. 14 [A.V., R.V. *tumult*]; Jer. xxv. 31). Hence the only sense, consistent with usage, that the word can have here is *roaring*. The expression is obviously figurative; and the Psalmist may have thought of a huge pit or subterranean dungeon (the word *bôr* denotes both), at the bottom of which were roaring waters. 'Destruction' (R.V.m. *alt.*) is also a meaning which ׀נשׁ nowhere else has. See further *Oxf. Heb. Lex.*, p. 980 f.

no support (cf. Ps. lxi. 2, 14f.); but he had been rescued from this perilous position, and placed securely on a rock. The figures, as often in the Psalms, are derived from the country scenery of Palestine. What the danger was we do not know: it may have been sickness, or persecution, or some other bodily peril; or, if the speaker be the nation, it may have been the Babylonian exile: cf. Lam. iii. 53-56, where the nation, after the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans, is described figuratively as a prisoner in a 'pit' or dungeon—the same word as here—with its mouth closed by a stone, and with the water flowing over his head.

3 And he put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:  
 many will see, and fear,  
 and will trust in Jehovah.

The occasion was one adapted to evoke the Psalmist's gratitude, and worthy to be celebrated by a 'new' song, worthy of the new occasion (comp. the same expression, Ps. xxxiii. 3, xci. 1 and xcvi. 1 [from Isa. xlii. 10], cxli. 9, cxlix. 1): the contemplation of God's mercy and power, shown in his deliverance, will arouse in others feelings of reverence and trust.

4-5. Happy those who trust in a God, whose goodness to His people is unspeakable!

4 Happy is the man that hath made Jehovah his trust,  
 and hath not turned to<sup>1</sup> the proud boasters, or such as  
 turn aside to lies.<sup>2</sup>

5 Many things hast *thou* done, O Jehovah, my God,  
 even thy wondrous works and thy thoughts towards us;  
 there is none to be compared unto thee;  
 if I would declare and speak (of them),  
 they are more than can be told.

4b. By the 'proud boasters'<sup>3</sup> are meant loud, self-

<sup>1</sup> Or, *looked at, regarded.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *and them that have lyingly fallen away* (Cheyne), Hupf., Bâthg. *al.*

<sup>3</sup> The word used occurs only here: but the root and other derivatives occur in the sense of *boastful pride*: Isaiah iii. 5 A.V., R.V., 'behave himself proudly'; Psalm xc. 10 R.V. 'Yet is their *pride* but labour and sorrow' (the *ἀλαζονία τοῦ βίου* of 1 John ii. 16); and in 'Rahab,' the

confident, and worldly men, who by their ostentatious self-assertion encourage others to rely upon them, and imitate their bad example. Happy the man who is content with God's help, and does not court their patronage or friendship! Those who—not (P.B.V.) 'go about with lies,' but—*turn aside to lies* (A.V., R.V.) are those who desert God for false objects of reliance, vain aims and hopes, empty ambitions, or even, it may be, for false gods (cf. the same word in Amos ii. 4). The other possible rendering, *them that have lyingly fallen away*<sup>1</sup> (i.e. *false apostates*), would denote apostasy distinctly.

6. Jehovah, on the contrary, is a sure ground of trust: He is the author of unnumbered benefits to Israel.

7-9. What adequate response can the Psalmist make for such goodness? And so he enumerates, like Amos (v. 21-24), Hosea (vi. 6), Isaiah (i. 11-17), Jeremiah (vii. 21 ff.), Micah (vi. 8), and other prophets, the great spiritual truth that the true response to God's works of love consists not in material sacrifices, or even in servile submission to an unloved superior, but in the devotion of the heart, in obedience to God's will, as something in which man delights, and which has its home in his inmost being.

- 6 Sacrifice and meal-offering thou hast no delight in;  
 ears hast thou digged for me;  
 burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not asked:  
 7 Then said I, 'Lo, I am come;  
 'in the roll of the book it is prescribed to me':  
 8 'I delight to do thy pleasure, O my God;  
 'and thy law is in my inmost parts.'

6. *Ears hast thou digged for me.* The expression, if the

name of the proud sea-monster in Job ix. 13, xxvi. 12, and of boastful Egypt in Isaiah xxx. 7 (cf. R.V.m.) and elsewhere. מַרְהַבָּה, 'pride' or 'raging' (of a tyrannical oppressor), must also be read for מַדְהַבָּה (which cannot mean either 'golden city' or 'exactress') in Isaiah xiv. 4; notice the same parallel 'oppress' (like a task-master) in Isaiah iii. 5.

<sup>1</sup> For the syntax in this case, cf. Psalm lix. 5 [Heb. 6]; and see G.-K. § 128c.

text is correct, must mean, Thou hast endowed me with the faculty of hearing and obeying, 'digged' being an allusion to the shape of the ears, channels scooped out, as it were, and conveying words to the mind.<sup>1</sup>

7. 'I am come' is a synonym of the usual 'Here I am' (Heb. 'Behold me!'). Like a servant responding to his master's summons, the Psalmist replies, 'Here I am, ready to fulfil thy behests: in the roll of the book it is'—not 'written of me,' a most misleading rendering, but—'written, or prescribed, to me' (see the same Hebrew with this meaning in 2 Kings xxii. 13). The reference may be in particular to Deuteronomy, in which, though ceremonial duties are not repudiated, a spiritual service, consisting of loyal devotion to God, and deeds of charity, mercy and benevolence towards men, is strongly and repeatedly insisted on.

8. A climax on v. 7. The Psalmist not only *knows* what God demands, but has a delight in doing it. The thought of the verse corresponds to what is so often inculcated in Deuteronomy, to love, or serve, God 'with *all* the heart and *all* the soul,' i.e. with the intellect and the emotions alike (Deut. iv. 29, vi. 5, x. 12, xi. 13, xiii. 3, xxvi. 16, xxx. 2, 6, 10). 'In my inmost parts' is here lit. 'in my bowels.' The bowels, in Hebrew psychology, are the seat of deep emotion (Job xxx. 27; Jer. iv. 19; Lam. i. 20, ii. 11), or warm affection (Isa. xvi. 11, lxiii. 15; Jer. xxxi. 20; Cant. v. 4): so the law, the Psalmist means to say, lay deep in his affections.

In Hebrews x. 5-7, vv. 6-8a are quoted, with a remarkable

<sup>1</sup> It lies near to say, 'to the *brain*'; but in the psychology of the Hebrews the heart, not the head, is the seat of intelligence. See e.g. Hosea vii. 11 'Ephraim is a silly dove, *without heart*' [we should say, colloquially, 'without a *head*']; Jeremiah v. 21 'O foolish people, *without heart*' (A.V., R.V. 'without understanding'); and frequently. There is no indication that the Hebrews were aware of the real functions of the brain. They regarded the heart as the region of intelligence, and the 'soul,' kidneys ('reins'), and bowels (cf. on v. 8), as the seats of different emotions.

variation, adopted from the LXX, *a body hast thou prepared for me*, for the purpose of contrasting the perfect obedience of Christ with the inefficacy of the sacrifices of the Law. The origin of the variant is uncertain: it *may* rest upon a various reading in the Hebrew; though naturally, if this is the case, it can have no claim to represent the original text, the sense expressed by it being too incongruous with the context. It is, however, a plausible suggestion that it originated partly in a corruption in the Greek (for which there are many parallels in the LXX), partly in either a different reading in the Hebrew, or in a misrendering of the existing text: 'body' having come in for 'ears' through the corruption of ΗΘΕΛΗCΑCΩΤΙΑ into ΗΘΕΛΗCΑCΩΜΑ,<sup>1</sup> and *κατηρίσω* either being an ungrammatical rendering of כנת (i.e. כנת) <sup>2</sup> for כרת, or representing (correctly) a reading הכנת (i.e. הכנת). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews shows no immediate knowledge of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and treats the LXX as authoritative.<sup>3</sup> He quoted, therefore, the passage as he found it, the word 'body' at once suggesting its applicability to Christ. In so far, however, as the rendering of the LXX can be brought into harmony with the context—which is often quite impossible with the renderings of the LXX—the 'body' must be regarded as the organ of obedience: 'as the ear is the instrument for receiving the divine command, so the body is the instrument for fulfilling it' (Kirkpatrick). On the sense in which the passage is quoted in the epistle with reference to Christ, see below.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. W. Mozley, *The Psalter of the Church* (the LXX of the Psalms compared with the Heb., with explanatory notes), 1905, pp. xv, 73 (where instances of similar corruptions are quoted).

<sup>2</sup> The Qal of כון, though found in Phoen., Arab., Eth. (in which languages it has the weakened sense of *to be*), is not in use in Heb.; and if it were in use, would be an intransitive verb, and could not therefore signify 'establish' or 'prepare.'

<sup>3</sup> Westcott, *Ep. to the Hebrews*, p. 479.

Vv. 9–11. The Psalmist declares that he has given open expression to his gratitude by proclaiming publicly God's goodness towards him; and that he anticipates the continuance of His favour.

9 <sup>1</sup> I have proclaimed glad tidings of <sup>1</sup> righteousness in a great congregation:

lo, I will not restrain my lips,  
Jehovah, *thou* knowest.

10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;

I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:

I have not concealed thy kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

11 Thou, Jehovah, wilt not restrain thy compassion from me;  
let thy kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

*Righteousness* is that attribute of God in virtue of which He acts justly,<sup>2</sup> and gives men—here, in particular, the Psalmist—their due; *faithfulness* expresses His consistency with His revealed character; *salvation*<sup>3</sup> is the fulness of deliverance and consequent well-being, resulting from the exercise of these attributes; *kindness and truth*—often

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew the word (בשרת) = εὐγγελισμός, as the LXX rightly render it.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isaiah xli. 2, of Jehovah's guiding Cyrus in his career of conquest; 10, of His protecting Israel, and restoring it to Palestine; xlii. 6, of His call of ideal Israel, 21; xlv. 13 of His prospering Cyrus that he may release the Jewish exiles.

<sup>3</sup> The Heb. words for 'salvation' (ישועה, ישיע, and, as here, תְּשׁוּעָה—the last formed by a false analogy, as if from תָּשׁוּ) mean properly, as Arabic shows, *breadth, spaciousness* (cf. the participle of the cognate verb in Matt. vii. 13, in an Arabic version of the Gospels, for πλαρεία); they thus in Hebrew denote primarily a *material deliverance*, as appears very clearly from 1 Samuel xi. 9, 13, xix. 5 (so the syn. יְשׁוּעָה, Ex. xiv. 13, 1 Samuel. xiv. 45 *al.*). In the Psalms the context shows that all these words usually mean similarly either *deliverance* or *welfare* (Job xxx. 15, A.V., R.V.), *well-being*, as iii. 2 (A.V., R.V. *help*; so lx. 11), 8 (R.V.m. *victory*; so xx. 5, xliv. 4, cxix. 4), xiii. 5, xviii. 2, 35, 50, xxxiii. 17 ('safety'), xlii. 5 (A.V. *help*, R.V. *health*, i.e. *welfare* ['Heil']; see my *Parallel Psalter*, p. 473), xlii. 11 and xliii. 5 (also *health*), lxxiv. 12, cxxxii. 16 (P.B.V. *health*, as li. 14 and elsewhere; see above), etc.; and in the present passage. In the prophets, especially Deutero-Isaiah, it is often used in a larger sense of a *material deliverance accompanied by spiritual blessings* (e.g. Isa. xlix. 6); and this leads on to the purely spiritual sense which σωτηρία, its equivalent in the LXX, acquires in the New Testament.

linked together, whether denoting human (Gen. xxiv. 49 ; 2 Sam. ii. 6 *al.*) or divine (Exod. xxxiv. 6 ; Ps. lvii. 3, lxi. 7) qualities—express the combined warmth and trustworthiness of the Divine heart. These Divine attributes have been the Psalmist's themes, in his public recital<sup>1</sup> of God's mercies ; they have been manifested in the deliverance of His servant—and, it may be, of others, his compatriots or co-religionists, at the same time ; and he prays hopefully for their continuance. For now fresh troubles encompass him, and the Psalm closes with an earnest prayer for speedy deliverance—

- 12 For innumerable evils have encompassed me,  
mine iniquities have overtaken me,<sup>2</sup> and I cannot see ;<sup>3</sup>  
they are more in number than the hairs of mine head, and my  
heart hath failed<sup>4</sup> me.
- 13 Be pleased, Jehovah, to deliver me ;  
Jehovah, haste thee to help me.
- 14 Let them be ashamed and abashed together, that seek my soul  
to sweep it away ;<sup>5</sup>  
let them turn backward and be brought to confusion, that  
delight in my hurt.
- 15 Let them be appalled by reason of their shame<sup>6</sup>  
that say unto me, Aha, aha.
- 16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee ;  
let such as love thy salvation say continually,  
'Jehovah be magnified.'
- 17 But I am poor and needy ;  
the Lord thinketh of me :  
thou art my help and my deliverer ;  
O my God, make no tarrying.

<sup>1</sup> 'A great congregation,' as xxii. 25, xxxv. 18: cf. xxii. 22 ; and 'congregations' in Psalm xxvi. 12, lxxviii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Viz. in their consequences, 'like an avenging Nemesis' (Hupf.) ; cf. for the word Deut. xxviii. 2, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Sight fails him, he cannot see which way to turn, through the distress and anxiety caused by his troubles ('evils'). Compare xxxviii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *forsaken*. Heart = courage ; cf. xxvii. 14, xxxi. 24, lxxvi. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., in the Heb., Genesis xviii. 23, 24 ; Numbers xvi. 26 ; 1 Samuel xxvi. 10 ('destroy' and 'consume' obliterate the distinctive figure of the original).

<sup>6</sup> I.e. the disgrace that will fall upon them.

As has been already remarked, it is strange that a Psalm so original in thought and expression as *vv.* 1–12 should end in such conventional phrases as form the bulk of *vv.* 13–17<sup>1</sup> (which, as was said before, recurs, with insignificant differences, as Ps. lxx.); and it is difficult to think that both parts of the Psalm are by the same poet. On the other hand, *v.* 12 is not a natural ending to the Psalm, and seems to require a prayer to follow it. It may be that the original poet, for some reason or other, adopted *vv.* 13–17 as his conclusion; it may be that the original ending was lost, and a compiler attached *vv.* 13–17 to the part of the original Psalm which remained. On such matters we can but speculate. If, however, *vv.* 1–12 belong together, how is the unity of the Psalm to be maintained? How can the poet in the same breath thank God for his deliverance, and complain that he is surrounded by troubles innumerable? *Vv.* 2–3 cannot synchronise with *v.* 12: if the unity of the Psalm is to be preserved, *v.* 2 f. must describe the danger from which the Psalmist was delivered in the past, and *v.* 12 the fresh troubles which have fallen upon him since. Observe how a single word in P.B.V., A.V., R.V. obscures this. ‘*Hath put*’ in *v.* 3 suggests what has just occurred, and so is in contradiction with *v.* 12: we require aorists throughout *vv.* 1–3: what is described in these verses is then thrown entirely into the past: *v.* 12 describes what is happening in the present; and the two parts of the Psalm become perfectly consistent.

The Psalm is one of those in which the speaker *might* be not an individual, but Israel, as represented by its God-fearing members, and personified (so Cheyne, Bâthgen). The ‘pit’ from which the speaker was rescued would in

<sup>1</sup> *V.* 13b, as xxii. 19 *end*, xxxviii. 22a; *v.* 14 closely resembling xxxv. 4, with a phrase substituted from xxxv. 26a; *v.* 15 *end*, as xxxv. 21; *v.* 16 very similar to xxxv. 27; *v.* 17a. as xxxv. 10, xxxvii. 14.



this case be the exile (cf. Lam. iii. 53-6, referred to above; and with *v.* 3, cf. Isaiah xlii. 10, xl. 5*a*, lii. 10*b*). The 'I' of the Psalms unquestionably sometimes denotes the nation (Ps. xliv., cii., cxviii.); and the figures and expressions could be more than paralleled from Lam. iii., where the speaker is certainly the nation. The first (and second) person singular is often used of a people or tribe, even in Hebrew prose; and Israel itself is frequently in the prophets personified as an individual ('When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt,' Hos. xi. 1; 'O Lord, correct me, but with judgement, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing,' Jer. x. 24).<sup>1</sup> There is thus no objection in principle to this view of the Psalm: we have only to consider whether the expressions and language of the Psalm can naturally, and without forcing or artificiality, be understood of the nation. The explanation of the Psalm remains the same as if the speaker were an individual.

The Psalm thus portrays an *ideal* of obedience and spiritual service. A ready and willing obedience, not to the ceremonial requirements of the Law, but to the moral and spiritual demands which God makes of His worshippers, is the best and truest return which a grateful heart can render for mercies received. As has been already pointed out, this is the teaching of all the great prophets; and here the Psalmist endorses and affirms it in his own person.

It has been remarked above that *vv.* 6-8*a*, as read in the LXX (with some slight variations), are quoted in Hebrews x. 5-7 with reference to Christ ('Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,' etc.). It must be obvious that the Psalm, in its original intention, has no reference to Christ: it is some

See further instances cited in my *Introduction*, p. 366 f. (edd. 6-8, p.

Old Testament saint, not Christ, who declares that it is his delight to do God's will ; hence ' I am come ' in *v.* 7 cannot refer to the Incarnation : if further proof were needed, it would be found in *v.* 12, where the Psalmist speaks of his ' iniquities,' which, except by most strained and unnatural exegesis, can be understood only of the iniquities which he has himself committed. It is, of course, perfectly true that parts of the Psalm are appropriate to Christ, and might well have been taken up by Him upon His lips ; but to argue from this fact that the Psalm was written with reference to Him, or that the entire Psalm is applicable to Him, is to confuse two things that are entirely distinct. A possible *application* of a Psalm is no guide to its *interpretation*, and cannot determine its original intention. Rather, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts *vv.* 6-8a into Christ's mouth, not because the Psalm as a whole refers to Him, but because, as expressing a high ideal of obedience and spiritual service, these verses are, in the words of the present Dean of Ely, a ' fitting expression of the purpose of His life,' and of His perfect conformity to His Father's will. And so the Psalm is suitably appointed in the Anglican Church as one of the proper Psalms for Good Friday.

S. R. DRIVER.

## STUDIES IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### IV. THE LORD'S PRAYER.

IN Luke xi. 2-4 the Lord's Prayer is communicated in a reply to a request from a disciple for instruction in this matter. The request is one of the few ascribed to the disciples which do not betray spiritual obtuseness ; and it was defensible on two grounds. On the one hand, as we learn from Seneca, Persius, and Juvenal, the subject of prayer occupied many men's minds in the first century,