

which such a subject demands. Canon Driver, who has given himself so much to criticism of late, will write articles in Biblical Theology only. Professor A. B. Davidson has accepted the great subjects of Angels, Covenants, God, Eschatology, Jeremiah, Hosea, Prophecy. Professor Ramsay will do the whole of the Asia Minor work, and

Professor Gwatkin the whole subject of the Organization of the Apostolic Church. But it is as impossible here to name the whole of the hundred and fifty authors who will have a share in the work as to make a selection from their number. For the present, we have said enough.

The Theology of the Psalms.

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BIBLICAL THEOLOGY depends upon biblical criticism. Systematic theology may often be content to discard consideration of the date of a given portion of Scripture, but biblical theology aims at presenting revealed religion in its historical growth and development, and for it a discussion of date and authorship is always important, sometimes absolutely essential. Hence the student of the Psalter who desires to understand its theology, not as a finished product, but as a living reality, not as a collection of dried plants in a herbarium, but as a growing and blossoming tree, inquires, first of all, concerning the dates of the several psalms in our present collection of collections, and the conditions and circumstances of their composition.

Now here, as is well known, direct and assured reply cannot be given him. Many Old Testament questions are bound up with the answer, questions which are only on the way to settlement, and even critics who are agreed about these differ in their views concerning the dates of the Psalms. It would, indeed, be possible to describe the religious thoughts of this wonderful book without troubling ourselves over the controversies of critics. But some general idea should be given by anyone who undertakes to write upon the theology of the Psalter as to where he stands in this matter, and from what point of view the religious development implied in the book is regarded. Briefly, the view of the Psalter on which the following papers will be based is this. The first collection of Psalms was probably made shortly after the Return from Captivity. In it were contained some psalms from David's own pen,—e.g. iii., iv., vii., viii., xviii.,

part of xix., and others, etc.,—while the whole collection was known by his name. Other pre-exilic psalms are to be found in this and in subsequent groups, but those written by David himself are few in number, and of other authors' names and history we know little or nothing. A very large proportion of psalms is to be ascribed to the times of the Exile and shortly afterwards, while the process of collection went on for at least two centuries after the Return. The *terminus ad quem* is not easy to fix. The latest date possible is 150 B.C.—if indeed, in view of the composition of the LXX. Psalter and facts connected therewith, so late a date be considered tenable. Those who have carefully considered the arguments alleged, e.g. by Professor Sanday,¹ concerning the processes necessary to be allowed for between the composition of the latest psalm and the features characteristic of the Greek version, will hesitate before allowing that any of the psalms that have come down to us can be assigned to so late a period.

For practical purposes, it may be said that the range of composition extends from the tenth to the second century before Christ. But few psalms are to be assigned to the first two or three of these centuries, and concerning some of these it is not possible to speak very positively. A number may be placed with some confidence in the seventh century before Christ; whilst the great majority date from the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. A few were added later, and some Maccabæan psalms may possibly be included. It will be seen that the view here sketched is 'conservative' in character, as the

¹ Bampton Lectures on *Inspiration*, pp. 270-272, Note A, on 'The Inferior Limit for the Date of the Psalter.'

words conservative and advanced are understood in criticism. But it cannot be considered admissible, in the present state of Old Testament criticism, to build any conclusions of importance upon the Davidic authorship of a large proportion of the Psalms. As a 'pious opinion,' using the name 'David' as generic and representative, it is still possible to speak of a portion of the Psalms as Davidic, but evidence of a more assured kind than any within our reach would be necessary if anyone were to undertake, for example, to build up a theology of the Psalter on the assumption that all the ideas contained in psalms described as 'of David' in the titles were actually current in Israel a thousand years before Christ.

Happily, most of the leading questions of theology may be considered without entering upon debatable ground. No very distinct progress of thought is discernible in the views taken of the character of God during the course of these centuries, or in the nature of human piety and devotion. That there was a progress in spirituality of conception is tolerably certain; but it is one not easy to define and specify very accurately. On some topics, the great question of a theodicy for example,—the vindication of the moral government of God as regards the lot of the righteous and the wicked,—progress is discernible. So in the prevalence of 'universalism' over particularism in Jewish thought, an advance may be clearly traced; though in this respect the tide ebbs somewhat after it has flowed, and the line of progress is by no means evenly sustained. It is in relation to the subject of life beyond the grave that we are most desirous to be able to date our sources with accuracy. A few fixed points—assurance, for example, as to the date of the 16th Psalm—would enable both the expositor and the biblical theologian to speak with much greater confidence. But within certain clearly definable limits it is possible even with our present data to describe the religious life reflected in the Psalter with a near approach to accuracy.

For the Psalter, in the first instance, reflects religion, not theology. The writers are not prophets, moral teachers of Israel, or apostles, writing doctrinal epistles in order to lay the foundations of a church. Some of the psalms are prophetic in character, a few are distinctly didactic; but for the most part they are the outbreathings of pious and often sorely troubled hearts. They are poetical in form, and the biblical theologian

must allow for this, and not 'break a butterfly upon the wheel' by demanding the precision of a treatise in the lyrical outpourings of grateful or sorrowing souls. These considerations, however, being allowed for, it will not be difficult to detect the theology which underlies these marvellous effusions of deep and earnest religious feeling. A tree is known by its fruit, it may also be known by its flowers. Theology is present in the Psalter, not in its crude or technical, but in its most highly sublimated, form. In the Psalms we hear Israel's heart beat, and the wise physician can judge of many things from the beating of the pulse. But it is a living theology, not a *caput mortuum* of articles ready to be framed in a creed that we are to look for in the Psalms. The words of the writers must be allowed for, 'inconsistencies' must not be hardly, and therefore unfairly, judged. Pedantry is out of place anywhere in the study of religion; in dealing with the Psalms most of all, it is needful to avoid the charge of being

a fingering slave,
One who would peep and botanize
Upon his mother's grave!

Here, most of all, we put off our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. Reverence and sympathy should be characteristic of the biblical theologian in all his work, and special manifestations of these qualities are needed in a study of the theology of the Psalter.

After this perhaps too lengthy introduction, we may say that theology in the Psalms, as elsewhere, has for its three central points or generating foci—God, the Soul, and the World. If we can give a tolerably clear answer to these three questions, What kind of God did the Psalmist believe in? How did he regard the relation between God and the individual soul in religion? and, What was his outlook upon the world of the present, and his anticipation concerning its future? we shall have the three chief 'moments' of the theology of the Psalms. Or, more exactly; the character of the Psalmist's God; the chief features of his religious worship, his personal experience and his ethical ideal; the relation between the individual and the religious community, and between that community and the outer world; his mode of dealing with the problems of providence, and the moral government of the world at large; the Messianic hope; and the prospect of immortal life beyond the grave,—these are the cardinal topics with which we shall be

concerned in the present series of articles. As, however, it will be impossible to deal with any of them at length, it will be desirable to treat none of them formally and technically. Instead of attempting a complete enumeration of passages, it will be well to take illustrative extracts, and to make clear a few salient points, instead of attempting to enumerate and group a large number. And first, concerning theology in its innermost sense—the doctrine of God which underlies the devout musings, the prayers and thanksgivings, the agonised cries and the lofty religious imaginings, of the Psalter.

Too much stress must not be laid upon the use of particular names of God in the Psalms. It is always to be remembered, however, that in the Bible a name is more significant than with us; the connotation proper to each has not worn down with the lapse of centuries, and the thoughtless employment of many tongues. In determining this significance, etymology cannot always be trusted, and the origin of the simplest names is most disputed. In many of the Psalms, moreover, it is tolerably certain that the hand of an editor can be traced, among other variations modifying the name of God used in earlier recensions. It is noticeable, however, that in the Psalter as it has come to us the name *Jehovah*—God's personal name, His covenant-name in relation to Israel—occurs 683 times, while *Elohim*—the general term for Deity—is found only 245 times. Though we cannot in every case insist upon the appropriateness of one of these titles rather than the other, we are quite warranted in saying that the predominance of the name *Jehovah* is no accident. The Psalmist sometimes appeals to the great supernatural Power, who is the God of nature and the supreme object of worship, but for the most part he is holding high fellowship with the personal God of grace, who is to him a Friend as well as a Ruler; with the national God who has revealed Himself in a specially gracious manner to Israel; with the covenant-keeping God, whose promises are at the same time the charter of the nation's privileges and the ground of the individual Israelite's faith and hope. In many verses of the Psalms an interchange of the names *Elohim* and *Jehovah* might doubtless be made without loss, for *Jehovah* is recognised as God over all, and the Psalmist is bold to say of *Elohim*, He is my God. But in other cases change would be fatal to the deep significance of the passage. It is with meaning that

the Psalmist cries, '*Jehovah* is my shepherd, I shall not want;' '*Jehovah* is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?' '*In Jehovah* put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?' On the other hand, the penitent soul, craving forgiveness, pleads, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness;' and the humbly dependent spirit, created for God and restless till it finds rest in Him, cries, 'As the hind panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' It is dangerous, however, to press this distinction very far or very often; and over and over again we are reminded in the Psalter that *Jehovah* and *Elohim* are one. In the 18th Psalm these names are significantly interchanged, and the ardent and generous-souled Psalmist, who bursts out in the opening of the psalm with 'Fervently do I love Thee, *Jehovah*, my strength,' says, later on, 'As for God, His way is perfect; the word of *Jehovah* is tried. For who is *Elohim* save *Jehovah*? And who is a rock beside our God?' While in the two parts of the 19th Psalm there is an equally significant conjunction, and in the same breath Israel adoringly sings, 'The heavens declare the glory of God' and 'The law of *Jehovah* is perfect,' 'O *Jehovah*, my rock, and my redeemer.'

The secondary titles of God are more generally used in their full original signification. The terms *El* and *Eloah* do not come into this category. The former of these is the most general name of God, and is found about seventy times in the Psalter; while it can hardly be maintained, as is sometimes done, that the latter name specially represents God as an object of reverence and awe. The combination in Ps. l. 1, 'El-*Elohim*-*Jehovah*,' is certainly intended to emphasise the majesty of the Being who is about to appear in judgment, but more than this it would not be safe to say; while the use of *Eloah* in ver. 22, 'Consider this, ye that forget God,' does not appear to have any special significance. With the names *Elyon* and *Shaddai*, it is otherwise. Where these are found, the Psalmist must be understood as emphasising the attributes of God *Most High* and God *Almighty* respectively. The usage of the former of these titles is not yet uniformly acknowledged among scholars. Canon Cheyne inclines to regard it as a mark of late date, but with hardly sufficient reason. The use of the word as predicate in a few places such as xcvi. 9, 'For Thou, *Jehovah*, art most high (*Elyon*) over all the earth,

Thou art exalted far above all Elohim,' shows that the primary connotation of the word was not lost sight of, whilst the passages in which it is used as a proper name justify our insisting upon the full meaning of the English translation: 'Jehovah thundered in the heavens, and the *Most High* uttered His voice' (xviii. 13); 'They say, how doth God know? and is there knowledge in the *Most High*?' (lxxiii. 11); 'Sacrifice to God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows to the *Most High*' (l. 14). Again, the name *Shaddai* must certainly be credited with its full meaning in lxviii. 14, 'When the *Almighty* scattered kings therein, it was as when it snoweth in Zalmon,' and both words happily unite in xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the *Most High* shall abide under the shadow of the *Almighty*.'

The name *Sabaoth* would repay a closer examination than we can here give it. Its use in the Psalter should be studied in connexion with its occurrence elsewhere in the Old Testament. The full title is, 'Jehovah, God of hosts,' but the name is found in the form 'Jehovah of hosts' and 'Lord of hosts,' whilst the LXX use *Σαβαώθ* as a proper name, or translate by *παντοκράτωρ*. The name is not found in the books of the Old Testament from Genesis to Ruth; it is found in Samuel and Kings, but is very rare in Chronicles and Ezekiel, whilst in the Psalms and the prophets it is of very frequent occurrence. Whilst the title is thus undoubtedly to be considered poetical, and especially suitable in lofty and impassioned address, it must be understood to retain its significance as setting forth the glory of the Leader of the armies of heaven and Commander-in-Chief of Israel's armies on earth, the Ruler of the hosts on high, who, when He deigns to intervene on behalf of His people, assures them of certain victory. The full meaning of the title must be maintained in such places as these, 'Jehovah of hosts, He is the king of glory' (xxiv. 10); 'Jehovah of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge' (xlvi. 7); and in that great descriptive passage—

O Jehovah, God of hosts,
Who is a mighty one, like unto Thee, O JAH?
Thou rulest the pride of the sea;
When the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them.
Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain;
Thou hast scattered Thine enemies with the arm of
Thy strength (lxxxix. 8-10).

Instead of lingering longer upon the names and

titles of God, which form a study full of interest, but not very fruitful of assured results, we pass on to consider the character of the God in whom the psalmists trust, and whom they address in every variety of tone drawn from their many-stringed lyre. What may be called the implicit character of the Psalmist's God is not less remarkable than His explicit attributes; that which is taken for granted is as noteworthy as that which is expressly declared and enlarged upon. The being and excellence of God is the great tacit postulate of the Psalter. There is no questioning concerning this, no formal proof of that which to the Psalmist is self-evident. He never prays, 'O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul.' In his darkest moods—and dark moods are many and sometimes overwhelming in their despondency and gloom—one thing may always be taken for granted: God is, and God is good. We are apt to forget how much this implies, and how fully the Psalmist is persuaded of these fundamental and incontestable premisses of religion. The saddest psalm in the whole volume, one in which no gleam of hope appears to cheer the soul of the sufferer, whose mournful plaint ends in the darkness with which he began, is addressed to 'Jehovah, the God of my salvation' (lxxxviii. 1). In sad, as well as in joyful moods, one incontrovertible axiomatic truth dominates the thought and rules the strains of the inspired singer, 'Jehovah liveth, and blessed be my rock' (xviii. 46). When God has forsaken His servant, 'far from my help, and from the words of my roaring,' He is still 'my God, my God,' who listens to the prayer, 'Be not Thou far off, Jehovah; O Thou my succour, haste Thee to help me' (xxii. 1, 19). A doubt of such fundamental truth is hardly considered possible even amongst the sceptical adversaries of God and His people. The nearest approach to this that is admitted is, that 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' which may be clumsily paraphrased as meaning, 'The ungodly, in his senseless impiety, tries to persuade himself that no Divine Ruler takes count of his conduct' (xiv. 1). When it is said of the wicked, 'All his thoughts are, There is no God,' the meaning is shown by the parallel clause, 'The wicked, in the pride of his countenance saith, He will not require it' (x. 4). The only atheism which is recognised in the Psalter is the wilful, headstrong, but ineffective self-blinding of the practically godless man, who

contemns, though he dares not deny God; and blasphemously says, though 'in his heart' only, 'Tush, God hath forgotten, He hideth His face, He will never see it' (x. 12, 14).

With this may perhaps be appropriately joined the characteristic *uniqueness* of God as exhibited in the Psalms. The thought that God stands alone in the majesty of His being prevails of course throughout the Old Testament, but in the utterances of personal, experimental religion this article of the Jewish creed is exhibited in a striking form. Two words in the Hebrew, one a preposition, the other a conjunction, set forth from different points of view this attribute whereby God stands supremely alone in the devout thought of the Psalmist, though the English renderings of 'alone' and 'only' do not always correspond to this distinction. A few passages will make the general meaning plain. In iv. 8 we read in A.V., 'Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety,' an ambiguous rendering improved in R.V. by the substitution of 'alone' for 'only.' But the marginal rendering, 'in solitude,' shows that there is an emphasis in the original which English readers are likely to miss. The work of caring for and protecting His faithful ones is the work of God *alone*. The same meaning appears in lxxii. 18, 'Who only doeth wondrous things'; and in cxxxvi. 4, 'To Him who alone doeth great wonders' (cf. the phrase of the Prayer-Book, 'Who alone worketh great marvels'). Even more emphatic is lxxxiii. 18, 'That they may know that Thou ALONE, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.' Surely a consideration of these passages sheds light upon the sense in which the Psalmist used the phrase so much cavilled at, 'Against

Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.' In relation to human sin—not human offences, which may be against a man's neighbour or against the welfare of the community—as in all supreme rule and order, God shares His position with none. Sin is offence against Him alone. So with regard to righteousness, God's exhibition of this quality stands solemnly and gloriously alone (Ps. lxxi. 16).

Space will not permit of our further illustrating this point from the 62nd Psalm, which has been called the 'only' psalm, because within its short compass is repeated six times a particle translated 'only.' The word 'only' by no means renders the suggestive Hebrew יְחִידָא , which cannot be translated by a single English equivalent. To read the psalm carefully will furnish a better commentary upon our present text than any we could give. 'My soul waiteth *only* upon God; He *only* is my rock, and my salvation.' Whereas the wicked are anxious *only* to thrust down the righteous from his position of deserved honour, the righteous is bidden to wait *only* upon Him, to be silent, that His voice alone may be heard. This is enough for the devout spirit; for if God ALONE be rock and refuge, he who shelters under that sublime protection shall never be moved. If the severe expositor be disposed to say that too much is thus made of a particle, not necessarily implying uniqueness, the reply is ready that the feature of the psalmists' religion now insisted upon does not depend upon the use of a single particle, significant as that is, but is a notable feature of the religious life portrayed in the whole Psalter.

The subject will meet us again in a further study of the characteristics of the psalmists' God, to be undertaken in our next paper.

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