

Psalm c.

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REGARDING the contents and the aim of this Psalm in the main there has always been agreement. The singer or speaker describes the sentiments by which he is animated in his own walk, the principles which, in dealing with others, he recognises and means to recognise. He will have none but morally good persons forming his *entourage*, all the wicked he will remove far from him—nay, he will unsparingly exterminate them from the city of Jahweh. The speaker is thus an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and there occupies undoubtedly a leading position; if he is not king, at any rate he exercises a king's authority. *Who is he?* According to the title, David; and this opinion long held the field. Others have preferred to identify the speaker with Hezekiah. In recent times, under the influence of the manifestly late composition of the Psalm, attempts have been made to discover a Maccabæan chief to whom its words would be applicable. On the ground of the coincidence between the language of 1 Macc. 9⁷³ and v.⁸ of the Psalm, Hitzig fixes upon Jonathan; while the still more exact coincidence between this verse and 1 Macc. 14^{14, 36} has led Cheyne to fix upon Simon. But in both these passages may it not be that the form of expression has been chosen with the eye on our Psalm, in which one found a *speculum principum*, the description of the theocratic king as he should be (cf. Delitzsch, and Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms*)? Finally, some have gone so far as to explain away the prince altogether, and leave nothing but 'the ideal of an Israelite, or the ideal community' (so, e.g., Baethgen). All these divergent opinions do not, however, affect the exegesis, regarding which a rare unanimity has prevailed from the earliest times down to our own day. On this account one feels that it is almost a pity to introduce a discord into such a pleasant harmony.

But does the exegesis of the Psalm really encounter so few difficulties as to justify such unanimity? I leave out of account the last-mentioned of the above interpretations, for it is easy to show that at all events it does not answer to the original intention, and is possible only on the theory of a transferred sense. But can even

a king speak of himself in the terms we meet with in this Psalm? Take v.⁴—

A false heart shall remain far from me.
Of the wicked man will I know nothing.

Or v.⁷—

He shall not dwell within my house who practises
deceit;
He who speaks lies shall not stand before mine eyes.

Who, then, is this knower of hearts who can thus distinguish dispositions? Nothing certainly could be desired better than that subjects should be able to boast of such a ruler. But a king who speaks thus about himself would thereby run great risk of becoming a prey to flatterers and hypocrites. Moreover, the expressions, 'he shall dwell with me,' 'he shall minister to me,' 'he shall not dwell in my house,' betray a self-consciousness which might be pronounced exaggerated even in a king, for they simply presuppose that to minister to him, etc., constitutes the *summum bonum* which every man will eagerly covet. To cut off evil-doers is again all very well, but that he is to do this *every morning* (v.⁸) sounds oddly enough. If we ask, on the other hand, of whom all these expressions are used elsewhere, the answer is easy. One recalls the affinity of our Psalm with the Proverbs. We may compare v.^{4a} and v.^{2a} with Prov. 11²⁰, and v.⁵ with Prov. 16⁶. Both passages in Proverbs commence with 'An abomination to Jahweh ('הַזֵּעֵבֶת) is he who is of a false heart, he who is of a haughty spirit,' and the first proceeds, 'but well-pleasing to Him is he whose walk is unimpeachable' (cf. vv.^{2, 6} of the Psalm). The *לֹא אֶחְבֵּל*, 'I cannot endure,' of v.⁵ is found in this sense elsewhere, only in the mouth of Jahweh (Isa. 1¹⁸, similarly Jer. 44²²). The *לֹא אֶרַע* of v.⁴ finds its parallels in the utterances of Jahweh in Ps. 1⁶ 31^{7*} 37¹⁸, Amos 3², Hos. 13⁵, and the whole line in Ps. 5⁴ *לֹא יִנְרָד רַע*. In Ps. 5⁵ we have an exact parallel to v.^{7b} *לֹא יִכּוֹן לְנַגַּד עֵינַי*, which may be supplemented by reference to Ps. 102²⁸. In Ps. 5^{5b} we have the evil-doers of

* In the citations from the Psalms the verses are numbered as in the English (not the Hebrew) text.

Ps. 101⁸; in v.⁶ we read that Jahweh cuts off liars just as in 101⁶ (cf. v.⁷). To dwell in *the house of Jahweh* (vv.^{6, 8}) is the earnest longing of every pious Israelite (Ps. 23⁶ [read וַיִּשְׁבְּתִי] 27⁴ 84⁴; 5⁷ 26⁸ 66¹³; cf. 52⁸ 55¹⁴ 84¹⁰ 92¹³ 134¹ 135², and further, 24³ 15¹ 5⁴ etc.). With the בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי of v.⁷ we may compare Ps. 48⁹, the בְּקֶרֶב in our Psalm being required to make up the proper length of the verse. To *minister* to Jahweh as a priest (שָׂרָת, v.⁶) is the highest prerogative of the Israelite, and Jahweh Himself determines who may claim it (Ezek. 43¹⁹ 44^{15f.}). He it is also who exterminates (הִצְמִית, vv.^{6, 8}) the wicked (cf. Ps. 54⁵ 94²³ 143¹²). As to the 'every morning' (v.⁸), we may compare for the form, Isa. 33², Lam. 3²³; and for the idea, Job 38¹²⁻¹⁵.

Such references might be greatly multiplied, but what we have adduced should be quite sufficient. Only if Jahweh Himself is the speaker, only if He is the 'I' of the Psalm, do the whole contents of the latter yield a satisfactory sense, and show themselves to be in complete harmony with the language of the Psalter, as well as of the Proverbs and of the Old Testament in general. When I say *the whole contents*, I do not, of course, mean in the form in which these have come down to us. No difficulty need be found, indeed, in 'the city of Jahweh' (v.⁸), for Jahweh Himself might well use that expression about Jerusalem. But Jahweh could never 'walk in the innocence of His heart within His house' (v.²). It is interesting to note that Hitzig here proposed the emendation בֵּיתֶךָ, 'within Thy (Jahweh's) house.' This is materially but not formally correct. Rather must the subject be changed into the third person, namely, יִתְהַלֵּךְ, or better מִתְהַלֵּךְ, and לִבּוֹ, instead of אֲתִּהַלֵּךְ and לִבִּי. Further, in v.³ we must punctuate דְּבַר instead of דְּבַר, and instead of the false form עֵשָׂה we must read as in v.⁷ עֵשָׂה.* For everywhere else it is the persons who follow a certain course of conduct that are spoken of, and not the conduct itself; even in v.⁴ רָע is not 'wickedness', but 'the wicked man.' In this way the personal walk of the speaker, of which there can be no question in the case of Jahweh, is no longer an element in the contents of the Psalm.

The textual emendation proposed in v.² may be

* Both the forms we propose correspond to the reading in v.⁷, and the second of them was read in v.³ by the Septuagint and Jerome.

tested by its ability to remove the one serious difficulty in the Psalm, which presents itself in the same verse. No one has ever yet succeeded in giving a satisfactory rendering of מַחִי תָבוֹא אֵלַי. The translation, 'when wilt Thou (Jahweh) come to me?' cannot be justified by referring to Ex. 20²¹ or 2 S. 6⁹, or passages like Ps. 121¹, Isa. 58² 64⁵, Mal. 3¹. To connect the words with דְּרָךְ, 'when it (the way of the upright) comes to me' (*i.e.* to my knowledge or cognizance), is as unnatural as possible. But let us read in 2^a אֲשַׁבְּלֶךָ (cf. Ps. 32⁸ [18^{31, 33} 119¹]), and in 2^b מִי יָבוֹא אֵלַי, and then the passage will run—

I will instruct thee concerning the right way,
Who may come to Me;
He who walks in the innocence of his heart
Within My house.

I set not before Mine eyes
Him who speaks villainy;
Him who commits transgression I hate,
He abides not by Me.

So far the alteration of consonants and vowels. The Psalm thus contains instruction regarding the right walk which entitles man to fellowship with God, and regarding the sins which exclude him therefrom. It has its counterparts in Ps. 15 and 24³⁻⁶, and differs from them only in this, that here Jahweh Himself imparts the instruction. For that matter it is Jahweh Himself who answers the question of Ps. 15¹ in v.^{2ff.} as well as here, although His 'I' is not directly expressed.

Our Psalm was afterwards transformed into something quite different, whether this was due to corruption, or misunderstanding, of the text, or to deliberate intention. There is nothing impossible in this last supposition. If the piece was to be used as a temple-song, the continuous speaking of Jahweh might appear unsuited for this purpose. But we cannot decide the question. Our judgment regarding v.¹ must similarly remain in suspense. As it stands at present, it does not fit the *Kina*-measure which prevails throughout the Psalm, because the second line is too long by one word. But this is easily remedied by reading לִיְהוָה. If the verse belonged to the original composition, a verse introducing the speech of Jahweh must have been dropped out after it. This is perhaps the simplest solution.

When attention has been once called to the correct interpretation of this Psalm, one will find it

difficult to shut one's eyes to it. The phenomenon here observed is not void of wider significance. By an example we have proved, what otherwise we must only assume, that many of the Psalms have had a chequered course, and that they no longer sail under their original colours. In prosecuting the task of literary criticism, therefore, it is not enough to accept the different pieces as they have

been handed down to us; on the contrary, the possibility must always be kept in view that for the position they presently occupy they were only adapted by being worked over. Thus even compositions of considerable antiquity may be concealed under a modern dress, although this remark certainly does not apply to the Psalm we have considered.

Requests and Replies.

Now that the University of St. Andrews has discontinued admission to the B.D. degree on the part of non-residents, is there any Divinity degree in the United Kingdom open to Nonconformists by examination without residence?—F. F. B.

It is proverbially difficult to prove a negative, and one or two correspondents have kindly pointed out that Bachelors of Arts of the University of Dublin may after three years proceed to the B.D. degree by examination only, without further residence, and that this is open to Nonconformists as well as Anglicans. As a B.A. of Oxford or Cambridge can be admitted to the corresponding degree in Dublin by paying the usual fees, the privilege of going forward to the B.D. degree under the same conditions is open to him also. The system is thus very similar to that which now obtains in Scotland, but obviously offers no more help to the large number of graduates of London, Durham, Royal University of Ireland, and Colonial Colleges, who are in the ministry of the Nonconformist Churches, and from whom the majority of the candidates for the St. Andrews B.D. under the old regulations were drawn. It ought to be mentioned also that in Dublin a B.D. of five years' standing may become a candidate for the degree of D.D. by presenting a thesis for approval, and that this also is independent of ecclesiastical connexion.

In making this important correction of my notes in the last number of this magazine, I regret that circumstances had never previously given me any special occasion to familiarise myself with the arrangements of the University of Dublin, and that I was thus led to do injustice to that ancient and famous institution. And I may be permitted here to thank the Rev. John

Gwynn, D.D., Regius Professor of Divinity in Dublin University, for his courteous letter in reply to the request for information which I despatched immediately on the omission being brought under my notice.

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In what sense do the works of the blessed dead follow them (Rev. xiv. 13)?—J. R. J.

One finds it hard to believe that Professor Maurice had given sufficient consideration to this verse when he penned the paraphrase—'If you or they leave works which God has set you to do in this earth, poor and incomplete, these works will follow you, when you have passed through the veil.' Dean Alford seems not to say enough when he suggests that it is 'in blessed memory' that their works accompany the saints who rest from their toils. 'Accompany' is, surely, an inadequate interpretation of ἀκολουθεῖ μετ' αὐτῶν in connexion with τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. There is no suggestion as to what among the works of the dead those are which 'follow,' when to Canon Fausset's explanation that 'works are specified because respect is had to the coming judgment, wherein every man shall be judged according to his works,' it is added—'His works do not go before the believer, nor even go by his side, but *follow* him at the same time that they go *with* him as a proof that he is Christ's.' (The italics are the commentator's.) A difficulty against accepting 'works' as equivalent to 'reward' is suggested when Hengstenberg quotes Bengel's remark, 'Reward follows no one out of this world into the next, but is met with in that world.'