

with an ear open for the many echoes which this one clear voice has awakened in the souls of hoping, believing men of Israel. All criticism admits the priority and influence.<sup>2</sup> If we may change the metaphor, we can watch the stream of Messianic promise broaden and deepen as it pursues its way through every region of Hebrew history and see how profoundly it is coloured by the vicissitudes of the monarchy, till it pours itself into the open sea of the New Testament . . . 'He shall sit upon the throne of David his father, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'

These random jottings may serve as a popular introduction to the greatest inheritance of Israel. However, from earliest times Christian writers like Barnabas,<sup>3</sup> Clement<sup>4</sup> and Justin<sup>5</sup> remind us that it is an inheritance that now belongs to the Church. Every day in her liturgy she spreads out its riches for our reverence and love. To neglect the Old Testament is to lessen our understanding of him Who is its Perfect Fulfilment.

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## THE LABOUR AND SORROW OF LIFE

A NOTE ON PSALM lxxxix, 10

**I**N *The Observer* for the 18th May last, Bertrand Russell had an article which he entitled 'The Next Eighty Years'. In the course of it he said: 'My last ten years, according to the Scriptures, ought to have consisted of labour and sorrow, but in fact I have had less of both than in most previous decades'. Readers of the article may be glad of a note on the Scripture reference. This is certainly 10 Psalm 89 (90), 10, but it is not so clear which version Lord Russell had in mind. The words 'labour and sorrow' occur in all the following Anglican versions: the Prayer Book Version of the Psalms, for which that of the Great Bible was adopted in 1549; the Authorized Version, 1611; the Revised Version, 1881. The same words are used in the Douay Version, 1609-10. Both the first and the second of these versions lend themselves to the interpretation adopted in *The Observer*. The former reads: 'The days of our age are threescore years and ten, and though men be so strong, that they come to fourscore years: yet is their strength then but labour, and sorrow' (copied from the edition of 1663). The A.V. has:

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. J. O. Boyd, 'Echoes of the Davidic Covenant,' in the *Princeton Theological Review*, 25 (1927), p. 587.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Barnabas, 2, 7, 10 (ed. Bihlm., II).

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. I Clem., 19, 1 (ed. Bihlm., 46).

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Dialog. 23, 2 (ed. Arch., I, 128).

‘The days of our years are threescore years and ten ;  
 And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years,  
 Yet is their strength labour and sorrow,  
 For it is soon cut off and we fly away’.

The R.V. retains the first line of A.V. and proceeds :

‘Or even by reason of strength fourscore years ;  
 Yet is their pride labour and sorrow ;  
 Yet it is soon gone, and we fly away’.

Here the pride of life as a whole is more naturally suggested, and not pride peculiar to the additional ten years.

The original D.V. has : ‘And if in strong ones eighty years : and the more of them, labour and sorrow’. The sense of this has been altered in the current edition, which limits the labour and sorrow to any excess of years over the fourscore :

‘But if in the strong they be fourscore years,  
 And what is more of them is labour and sorrow.

This is a rendering of the Latin Vulgate, which gives the Gallican Psalter, itself St Jerome’s second revision of the Old Latin Psalter. The Latin is ‘et amplius eorum labor et dolor’. Such was St Jerome’s own understanding of the text. He gives it twice in his writings. In his commentary on Ezechiel, chap. xxvi, he writes : ‘. . . octoginta anni ; quidquid supra, labor et dolor est’ ; and in his Epistle no. 34 : ‘. . . octoginta : et quidquid superest, labor et dolor est’. The Gallican Psalter, however, is translated from the Septuagint, and there can be little doubt that by the words τὸ πλεῖον αὐτῶν the meaning intended was ‘the greater part of them’, that is of the years of life. This is in accord with experience—how often in our prayers we refer to this ‘vale of tears’ !—and also with the tenor of the Psalm.

This reading of the Septuagint has the support of the Aramaic Targum and of the Peshitta. It represents a Hebrew word similar to but different from that of the Hebrew Bible which the R.V. and others render ‘pride’. This variation of reading, however, hardly affects the point discussed in this note.

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