



THE HEART UNVEILED;

OR,

CHRIST AS OBJECT,

AND ITS EFFECTS.

“Thou art fairer than the children of men.”—Psa. XLV. 2.

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LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

Price One Penny.

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(PSA. XLV.)

AMID circumstances which distract the heart, trials which affect it from within and all the pressure brought to bear upon it from without, the mercy of having an object which, fully engaging it, leads the soul outside and beyond self and circumstances, filling it with satisfaction and joy, is great. The philosopher's stone of old was supposed to be a talisman, which could transmute everything it touched into gold. There is that which is akin to this idea in a spiritual way.

In this psalm, the heart of the

remnant of Israel being occupied with the beauties of the Messiah, all the sorrowful expressions used in the preceding psalms of the series (xlii.-xlix.) are changed with the changed heart, though all is anticipative, for the circumstances are apparently by no means changed. The series in which it occurs, and which opens the second book of psalms, is for the sons of Korah, the spared descendants of an ungodly rebel; it is suitable thus to us. Korah was taken in hot-handed rebellion against God. He had refused God's priesthood in Aaron and was linked with Dathan who refused lordship in Moses.

All who belonged to Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up alive, but the children of Korah were spared. This was because Korah was a Kohathite and God had said, "Cut ye not

off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites," those servants who come nearer to the priesthood than any others of the Levites and who, bearing the ark and the golden vessels, set forth those who are better able to appreciate what Christ is to God. God will not do without His Kohathites! He will have at all times those who know and minister Christ as He is to God in the sanctuary. Then all the people praise Him.

Our psalm is in the middle of the series and opens up the spring of the change in the heart of the remnant, and accounts for the difference in the expressions, in those which precede and those which follow. We may wonder how a people in such circumstances could be maintained in confidence in God and talk of uprightness of heart, having heard with their ears only of God's wondrous works in days

of old, but having had no present, personal intervention on their own behalf. (See xliv. 1.) Yet the Spirit of God, all unknown to themselves, does this, and at last occupying their heart with Messiah, transforms their complaints into a pæan of victory. The veil being taken away from their heart (2 Corinthians iii. 16), they cry, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God : God will establish it for ever." (Psa. xlviii. 8.) All is changed to them anticipatively.

Primarily, then, this psalm belongs to the remnant of the Jews, but they have no exclusive claims to the truths contained in it. Indeed it will always be found, whenever it is a question of the Person of the Christ, that the Christian's claims are of a higher character than the claims of the reignant, so that we may take up

their expressions as to Him in a much fuller way.

We may trace both the ministry of the new covenant and the ministry of reconciliation here, and this in order that the hearts of believers to-day may be led on to the object God invariably has before Him in His dealings with His people. That object is worship! "He is thy God; and worship thou him."

With this thought before us let us consider what, practically in this portion, is

OUR INTEREST IN CHRIST.

Glorious beyond conception is the Object, God given, for the believer to-day, which, throwing its own brightness over the gloom of surrounding circumstances, fills him with an answering glory. In turning to this Object the veil is taken away from

the heart, and beholding the glory of the unveiled face of the Lord, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord, the Spirit. This is as true for Gentiles as for Jews, for the God of this world veils the minds of them that believe not.

Very full is the recognition by the Spirit of the glories of Christ here. His superiority to the children of men; His coming in grace and meekness; His future victory over His enemies; His throne and kingdom; His personal glory as God; His triumph over death; His union with the bride—primarily the remnant, but spiritually the church; the name and perpetuity of the place which He gives her in connection with Himself; all is set forth here.

When the Spirit leads us to the contemplation of these varied glories

of Him who is altogether lovely, He changes, for us also, not the circumstances, but ourselves. Individual trials, troubles in the family, the business, the assembly, all are viewed differently. In God's ways these are to make us experience what the wilderness is, but when this is the case, as we turn to Him, He lifts us above them all, and we learn also what He is. They may press in upon us as they do at times, so that we cannot leave them behind, the mind recurring to them again and again, seven times. God wants reality, and He puts His people through such an experience that nothing but occupation of heart with Christ will deliver them. Then the Spirit of God presents Christ to the view. In the contemplation of His glories, we are brought by the Spirit to the place where Christ is all in all. Immediately

the thing is done. Victory is assured! How sufficient is He then! What difference to us if the earth were removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea? Therefore will not we fear! All the difficulties are beneath our feet. But in this is involved

A NEW NATURE.

The Spirit of God does not speak of the glories of Christ to a being who cares nothing for Him. But, wonderful thought! being born of God, all the susceptibilities of the new nature are active and the aspirations of the heart go out after Christ and to these the Spirit delights to minister. Only to that which is begotten of God in us can the Spirit minister a heavenly Christ.

Adam innocent never aspired to heaven. He had no susceptibilities for heavenly things, though competent

to understand the revelations God may have made to him; such as Himself as Creator and the earth as the sphere of his own life and happiness, as head of this lower creation. He may have entered into "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God;" but of the aspirations and faith by which his fallen son, Abel, offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than his brother, he knew nothing in innocence. Nothing of Him who was to accomplish that sacrifice, with His present heavenly position and the association, by faith, of His people with Him there. His very desires to be as God in the knowledge of good and evil were not true aspirations after God-likeness, but the immoral suggestions of the enemy, which, leading him to desire to raise himself in the scale of creation,

precipitated his fall. How much less could Adam's fallen race know any of these things apart from God working in them!

But God, in fulfilment of the dictates of His being—love, took occasion of that very fall to work in the hearts of fallen human beings a nature and susceptibilities that can be satisfied with nothing less than a full revelation of Himself in Christ, with aspirations after the very image of Him that created him. To such a soul, depressed by its surroundings, as in the wilderness and longing after better things, the Spirit of God unfolds the glories of the Christ.

When filled to oppression with the contemplation of His glorious being, it bursts forth with

AN OVERFLOWING HEART

" My heart is inditing a good matter : I speak of the things which I have made touching the king : my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." (Ver. 1.) Withdrawn from all one's surroundings, good or bad, and held by the Spirit of God in the contemplation of Christ, it is an easy thing to speak of Him. The matter having been thus created in the heart, the tongue becomes the pen of a quick scribe, and the praise which delights His heart flows on apace.

Were this more so individually, how different would our meetings for worship be ! No silence then, save the silence of adoration, and this only " till from a heart divinely pressed " again bursts forth His praise, in continual round. Who can speak of the joy of such meetings ? Here, surely, we may find something of heaven on earth begun.

Here is the true home of the spirit; to this all our desires would tend as far as earth is concerned. The meeting in assembly of Him who so loves us would, even in days of brokenness, fill both His heart and ours with divine satisfaction. If we are more accustomed to the silence of depression, it is because we are not individually sufficiently occupied with Christ and His glories.

But, as in our psalm, with both capacity and desires for it, the Spirit will occupy us with Him, and then at once the soul addresses its Object.

“ THOU ART FAIRER THAN THE
CHILDREN OF MEN.”

This is a remarkable expression for the psalms and supposes Him to be something more than the children of Adam's race. It can be understood how the remnant, considering Him

in retrospect, would arrive at such a conclusion ; the contemplation of that life, even apart from the knowledge of the revelation of what He is, could lead to no other. It is not remarkable for us, because we have the revelation and the knowledge of the fact, that from His birth He was a child of a new order ; beside this it is easy for faith to trace it through all His life here below.

Filled with wisdom as a boy, with the grace of God upon Him, sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, hearing and asking them questions in zeal for His Father's business, subjecting Himself to His parents, growing in wisdom and in favour with God and man, such things proclaim Him to be, in early days, " fairer than the children of men."

Entering upon His ministry the same tale is told. Untouched by

only death and judgment and has thus filled the hearts and mouths of the happy recipients with an unending praise, which fills His heart with joy.

Christ was the expression of this in the world; but grace must necessarily be based upon righteousness. The claims of righteousness must therefore be satisfied by Him, or He could not act in grace. This was ever before Him, but being now eternally settled, He can act in the fullest grace. Good it is to be strong in the grace which was in Christ Jesus. “Grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”

The next four verses (3–6) give the result to the remnant of His having ridden here in meekness, namely—

HIS THRONE AND KINGDOM.

Zion's King had come, "meek, and sitting upon an ass." But He shall ride prosperously because of this and His enemies shall fall under Him. They cried, "Who is this?" when He rode in meekness, and of Him they shall cry, "Who is this?" when He rides prosperously and in judgment.

Now the Person is the same whether for remnant or for Christian, but the result differs; to the latter the Spirit leads in a different line because of Christ's meekness. He is now, because of it, at the right hand of God, His kingdom established in grace in the hearts of His people, and the Spirit becomes to them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Him there, in the place of power. He is not to us coming as a conquering hero. God would have our hearts occupied with

Him where He is, that we may know that the power which put Him there is on our behalf while we are here. This, not simply that we may be superior to all the difficulties by the way, but that we may enjoy Himself, and be filled with His praise. Owning His rule in our hearts, and occupied with Him in glory, we are transformed into His image morally, as we shall be actually like Him in glory.

But He who thus came in truth and meekness and in perfect righteousness, is now shewn to be God in nature. He *loved* righteousness and *hated* wickedness. This is

HOLINESS.

Proved in the place of service, a kingdom is His. He sits upon a throne. He is God ! His sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. But more than righteous acts came out in His pathway

here. He *loved* righteousness and *hated* iniquity. He is God in nature and character! Having manifested this in His sojourn here, He lays hold of those whom He claims as companions in glory. He is a Priest, with a company of priests about Him there, but He Himself anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions.

He, holy inherently, they constituted holy by Him. He, there in His own right, they sustained by Him. The oil of gladness—the spirit of praise, is His in a superior degree to anything they can know. They may know the joy of being there and praising, but His is the joy of having them there and leading their praise. He will thus bring them as sons to glory; but He delights even now to present them to God, saying, “Behold I and the children whom God has given me.”

Now comes in resurrection. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." (Ver. 8.) How suggestive of His

INCORRUPTIBILITY.

They brought about a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes and wound Him in linen with the spices and put Him in the grave. Such was their means of preserving the body of God's Holy One from corruption. Short-sighted affection! He needed it not. His own confidence was in God that He would not suffer Him to see corruption, and though for a while He lay in the grave, yet it was a *new* tomb, "wherein never man before was laid." And "He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption." (Acts xiii. 37.) What can describe the glory of such a Person? Glorious in His life down here, in His grace

and meekness, truth and righteousness. Infinitely more glorious as the One who, victorious over death, came forth from the grave as from ivory palaces, redolent of incorruptibility. Hailed in all the power of His triumph, Son of the living God ! Thus declared to be such ! No more to return to the place of corruption, from whence He had come forth incontaminate, as in His life He had passed through this scene of moral evil. This is His victory obtained in the last stronghold of the enemy, and though we may be taken hold of by corruption for a moment, yet we too can take up the pæan of victory : " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? " " Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The remainder of the psalm is

occupied with the queen, the bride. How right that it should be so! Now if we form part of the church, to which this term may be applied, how blessed to know something of what His heart is toward us, as revealed here.

The first thing noticeable is that she is addressed by the Spirit as "daughter." (Ver. 10.)

"HEARKEN, O DAUGHTER."

This is an indication that the bride is in community of relationship with the Bridegroom. Not that it is natural to any, but it has been wrought within by His Spirit. A new creation is there, an inner man being the result. Scripture speaks, also, of God having quickened believers together with Christ. A new relationship is then established in resurrection, "I ascend unto my

Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Therefore the bride is called "daughter," being brought, in resurrection, into the same relationship as He, as a man is in, with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is past conception, though faith grasps firmly the truth, that He who is fairer than the children of men, being a man of a different order to the first race, can recognise in those whom He deigns to call His own beings of the same order as Himself. Yet this must be, or there could be no union.

Something more, however, is necessary in order to an experimental apprehension of union as a present thing, and this she is invited now to consider and incline her ear to. It is the Spirit of God appealing to hearts that Christ may have what

He desires in His own, for they are comely to Him with the comeliness that He has put upon them. He, as a divine claimant to their hearts, demands them exclusively. He can brook no rival. There must be no going back to old things. They must

LET THE PAST BE PAST.

"Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." The past of nature as well as the past of tradition must be for ever past now and forgotten. We are His, and being His is all our being. Concurrent claims deny this. Death rolls in between the soul and all else, and this must be practically recognised in order that that character of beauty may be presented which attracts the desire of Christ: a heart free from all but Himself, absorbed with Him from whom it takes its true character.

Faith apprehends and thus expresses this. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) Wherefore, no man is known after the flesh, yea even Christ is not now so known, but a Christ as head of a new order, fairer than the children of men. New creation, too, is shewn to be there where a man is in Christ; old things have passed away, and all things have become new and all things of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself in His own order of things where Christ is all. Here the ministry of reconciliation is touched upon and anticipated.

This the apostle practises too:

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the goal." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.)

The Spirit leads distinctly on thus to

UNION AND WORSHIP.

The heart of the bride in that state, Christ greatly desires her beauty. Then the heart recognises Him as Lord and worships Him. So is set forth both the blessedness and the result of union. Greatly is this to be desired that it may be entered upon now and individually, for "he that joins himself to the Lord is one Spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) It will then be more fully known in company and in the assembly, though surely in all its fulness it is future and corporate. When the heart is thus occupied with *His* beauty it is in

such a state that He can be occupied with its beauty and the joy is reciprocal, as this "song of loves" surely is. Worship flows apace then, the heart filled with its Object.

Eventually the bride, altogether suited to Him, without, within, the work of God completely, is brought unto the King. Her companions that follow her are brought with her, with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought unto Him. We had fellows of Christ in glory, and now the fellows of the bride. They are the other cities of Judah for the remnant, Jerusalem being the bride. So for the church there are others in glory whether as "friends of the bridegroom," or "fellows of the bride," though in lesser blessing. The bride is supreme and unique, and there is nothing like envy in any. Then "instead of thy fathers shall be

thy children." The past is behind and an entirely new future opens up, filled with richest, deepest blessing. The queen, the church, the heavenly bride, shall occupy a place which no other creatures of God's hand shall ever occupy and raise a note of worship such as none other ever can raise.

A unique place is now gained in heavenly glory, and with it the peoples' praise for ever. No envy there. No one shall challenge the position, but it shall be universally recognised, and she who holds it praised by all gradations of redeemed and glorified beings, as well as by all created intelligences. Thus in God's way is gained

PERPETUITY.

This perpetuity is the desire of all mankind, as shewn in the reflection

upon all this in Psalm xlix. The wise man, the fool and the brutish person all desire it, yet they pass off this scene. They call their lands by their own names, but this eventually dies out. They seek to perpetuate their names even in death, as in Isaiah xxii. 16-18. "What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?" God will not permit this to stand. They may adorn the triumph of death and decorate the tomb, but all in vain. They shall be tossed as a ball in a large country. The very tombs of the Pharaohs are rifled to-day for commerce! Only one such tomb shall remain in the memory of man, and as the result of that which was accomplished by Him who lay there,

God can say to His own, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations."

We need not trouble to write our names upon the earth, there is no perpetuity there. We shall be praised for ever when He comes to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. Here is perpetuity through Him who died that we might live. May He help us to enter into it. But let us remember that the object of it all is that He may be praised.

We may turn back upon the theme of the psalm then, to speak with the tongue of a ready writer the things we have made touching Him who is "fairer than the children of men." It all returns to Him in praise and adoration!

G. J. S.