

STUDIES
IN THE
PSALMS OF ISRAEL

Their Message For Our Day

Second Edition Enlarged

By
MAX ISAAC REICH

CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS, Inc.
Third and Reily Streets Harrisburg, Pa.

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The mark of

vibrant faith

(Printed in the United States of America)

Foreword

MEMORY recalls how, in youth, when still wrapt around with the swaddling bands of Judaism, though under the visitation of God, I felt drawn to the Psalms. They interpreted to me a life, possible on earth, in which God is known as a *living* God, and as a satisfying reality. How my heart yearned for that life! The venerable externalia of traditional Judaism seemed but "beggarly elements" in comparison with the real knowledge of God. The Psalms describe the possibility of delight in Him; of a walk beneath His smile; of strength found, through communion with Him, to overcome temptation and to endure afflictions; of the privilege of immediacy of access into His presence, without the need of ritual go-betweens. These things drew out the desires of my hungry heart.

Now that I have, through sovereign mercy, come into personal relations with Him, whose face, human and divine, shines from the pages of the book of Psalms, there is an added appeal. In them I love to trace His footsteps in the long ago; separated from defilement, and rejected by the religious leaders, but in sympathy near to the unshepherded masses, ministering "words of eternal life" to "the poor of the flock," to penitents and to outcasts. I see Him in the first Psalm as the blessed Man whose delight in the law of the Lord was constant by day and by night; whose secret life was rooted in divine depths, and who is now in His heavenly ministry, on the other side of death, "The Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Comp. Ps. 1: 1-3 with Rev. 2:7). In the Psalms I find His sympathies,

as the suffering Messiah, with the godly and afflicted remnant of Israel, found in their land in the end-time; their path so much like His, rejected by their apostate nation, and exposed to gentile hatred (see Rev. 14:1-5). The Psalms are full of Messiah's experiences. The first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews groups together seven psalm passages which outline the path of the Messiah from His virgin-birth to His session at God's right hand, besides bearing witness to His glories, personal and official. Truly these are things that angels desire to look into!

I am conscious that I have touched only the fringe in these musings. But even the hem of His seamless robe (and Scripture is thus woven throughout into a divine unity) conveys heavenly virtue in answer to the touch of faith, in our day as in past generations.

Should these unpretentious pages encourage others to penetrate this vast treasure house of divine teaching more deeply than their author has been enabled to do, he would feel they have not been written in vain.

MAX I. REICH.

Preface to the Second Edition

The First Edition of these studies in the book of Psalms appeared under the title of "How Long?" The edition having been out of print for a while, and a demand for its re-issue being expressed in various quarters, this second edition is now offered to the public under the title: Studies in the Psalms of Israel. The orthographical errors of the first edition have been corrected and several new chapters added. Otherwise it is the same book.

The Psalms show that the saints of olden time drank of

the same spiritual rock of which the God-seekers of this age drink. Thus, while there are dispensational distinctions, there is but one people of God, whose language to the God of their life is with Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psa. 73:25, 26).

May these simple meditations refresh the reader as they have first refreshed the soul of their penman! M. I. R.

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PSALMS OF ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

WE ALL feel that in reading the book of Psalms we enter into a different atmosphere than that which pervades the other books of the Old Testament. In the latter we listen to the speech of God to His people, whether it be directly, as from Mount Sinai, or by the prophets, or by great acts in history, whether in judgment or in redeeming grace. But in the Psalms we hear the answer which the people of God give to the divine speech; their appreciation of the divine self-revelation. It is this remarkable feature which has made the Psalms the most influential book of the Old Testament.

I will not dwell at length upon the structure of the book. A good deal has been written on this. Suffice it to say, that David is credited with some seventy-odd psalms out of the collection of 150. Other writers are Asaph, Moses, Solomon, Ethan, and others.* Some fifty-odd psalms were called "orphan psalms" by the ancient Synagogue, as the names of the authors had been forgotten. This shows with what care the psalm titles were affixed. They are very ancient, being found as early as in the Septuagint. Probably they were affixed in the days of King Hezekiah, under whose patronage there must have flourished a considerable amount of literary activity in Jerusalem, as is evident from Proverbs 25: 1, and when the authorship of many of the psalms was still known with good degree of certainty. So I am not in-

* The *Septuagint* affixes the names of Jeremiah, Haggai and Zechariah to several Psalms.

clined to tamper with these authorship titles, as the manner of modern critics is.

It is to David that we owe, under divine guidance, the beginning of the collection of psalms and spiritual songs which after the Babylonian exile became the hymnbook of the second temple. Its five sections were called by the Jews "the Pentateuch of David," as they seem to express in poetry the spiritual message of the five books to which the name of Moses is attached.

In thus composing and collecting his inspired songs, David built better than he knew. He was not indeed permitted to build a temple of cedar wood and gold. But he certainly built another and more enduring temple in the Psalms. The temple he would have built is gone, but the Psalms still remain. God indeed dwells among the praises of His spiritual Israel (Ps. 22:3). In the Hebrew Bible the Psalms bear the title "*T'Hillim*," that is "Praises." Not that praise is their only theme. We have prayers, confessions, problems, even human doubts in the presence of the mysteries of life and death. But all these exercises end in Hallelujahs. All the closing psalms are Hallelujah psalms. The psalmist cannot say Hallelujah fast enough and often enough when he has learned by divine grace and discipline to say *Amen* to the will and ways of God. And these celebrations of the divine perfections are a spiritual house in which the glory of God has taken up its abode.

We have said that in the Psalms we hear Israel speaking to God, echoing back what He had first spoken about to His people, whether by law or prophecy, by providence or history, or in the great lesson book of creation. But when we use the word "Israel," we must needs define our terms.

“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). The Israel we listen to in the Psalms is the true, the inner Israel, the godly remnant, often a very small and despised remnant, in the midst of a people bent on backsliding, a people which never understood its calling and election, its mission and place in the divine plan.

The spiritual witness of Israel is the fruit of the exercises of a mere fragment of the people. This suffering remnant kept the lamp of faith burning in the midst of pagan darkness from century to century. This remnant rallied to the anointed prophets and their ministry when it would seem as if they were ploughing a lonely furrow. It was for the sake of this living kernel that the shell was miraculously preserved. And in the fulness of time, this remnant became the matrix in which the Christian Church was formed, the larger Israel, the catholic people of God no longer confined within the framework of a specially chosen nation. Historically speaking, the remnant of Israel is the spiritual mother of the church, as Martin Buber rightly said in his address to his Jewish brethren: “We must get rid of our insane prejudice against Christianity, seeing it is the fruit of a revival movement breaking out in the Jewish synagogue.” Oh, that the daughter might learn to do justice to the “good” that was with the mother, so that the mother might learn to appreciate and appropriate the “better” that is now found in the daughter!

Nearly all that is precious and vital in the Christian faith has been inherited from these our spiritual fathers whose voice we hear in the book of Psalms. That God is not a metaphysical speculation, found at the end of an argument;

that He is more than a pantheistic dream, an impersonal life-force, but a living, loving Personality, entering into personal relations with the individual man, however lowly or obscure: that we can commune with Him as a man speaks with a loved and trusted friend; that He has a heart to feel and a hand to succor His trusting ones: is one of the contributions the remnant of Israel has made to the religious thinking and feeling of the centuries that have succeeded her Old Testament witness.

Coupled with this is the discovery of the ethical nature, the holiness of God, and that He demands an ethical response from His worshippers. Can the men of Attica with all their wisdom match this? The God of Israel hates sin and teaches those who seek Him to hate sin also. They find their secret sins exposed and rebuked by the light of His pure countenance (Ps. 90:8). Hence the note of *penitence* in the book of Psalms. We meet with this phenomenon: the greater the saint, the deeper his sense of sin. And then, flowing from this, the *evangelical* experience in the love that pardons, purifies the heart, restores the joy of salvation, puts a new song in the mouth of the one whose feet have been lifted out of the deep mire and placed upon a rock (Ps. 40, 41). And this rapturous discovery of the grace of God to penitents again makes the one who has found it *evangelistic*. If the evangelistic note is becoming feeble in some places, is it not because the evangelical experience is losing its brightness? So Psalm 32 fulfills the vow of Psalm 51, that if God would only meet the agony and anguish of the penitent with forgiveness and cleansing, "*then* will I

teach transgressors thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

And so the Psalms contain the Gospel of God "which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures" (Rom. 1 : 1, 2).

But this Gospel is "concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh ; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1 : 3, 4). Therefore we ought to meet with the Hope of the Messiah. His Person and work, His death and resurrection, the oath-sealed Messianic covenants with Abraham and David, the two roots of promise to Israel, in which the Gentiles are deeply interested, in the Psalms. And so we do, and that in rich abundance. The Psalms are shot through and through with the Messianic Hope. The first two psalms are one psalm in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts and in the Septuagint, and are an introduction to the entire collection. If in the first part we meet with the Blessed Man who measures up to the holiness of the Law—and only One did so—the second part brings in the counsels of God to set Him as King over the nations, His scepter extending to the uttermost parts of the earth, in spite of the determination of the League of Nations and of the kings of the earth to refuse submission to His authority. He is addressed by Jehovah in these words: "Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee," a glory which the princes of this world who brought about His crucifixion (1 Cor. 2 : 8), will yet have to own or perish. Thus from the very start the purpose of God to have His Son installed in the seat of ab-

solute preëminence in heaven and on earth is clearly borne witness to.

This kingdom-glory He reaches through the deepest personal humiliation, through the cross of utter shame. He does indeed turn the cross, where evil in man has reached its height of expression, into the means whereby the redeeming love of God triumphs over evil and brings salvation, even though the guilt of that crime remains fastened on those who do not repent of it. That cross is the central theme of Holy Scripture, from the first mention of the heel-pierced, yet victorious, Seed of the woman, to the Lamb, as it were newly slain, in the midst of the throne in the Apocalypse. That "wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died" is the central theme in the Psalms. All the aspects of the death of Christ, as set forth in the various offerings under the Law—the Sin and Trespass offerings, the Burnt offering, the Meal offering, the Peace offering—are celebrated in holy song (see Psalms 16, 22, 40, 41, etc.). Of these things we cannot speak in detail in this brief introduction.

Alas! still does the veil of Moses darken the eyes of the Jew when he reads the Scripture! He can see the letter but not the spirit of the old covenant. He is spiritually blind to the glory of the Lord in its pages. But how will the remnant of Israel, in a day rapidly approaching, when passing through the furnace, seven times heated, turn to the Psalms and be comforted in finding in them the feelings and the language of Him who in all their afflictions was afflicted, as a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, even in the unspeakable woe of being forsaken of God when bearing sin atoningly, that He might sympathize with them and

succor them in their bitter hour of trouble! And does not every afflicted and tempted believer today meet with that same sympathy and grace reflected in that priceless portion of our holy Book?

I

“How Long?”

MANY of the Psalms are the outcome of perplexity. The heart of the seeker after God, baffled with the mysteries of life and death, often gave way before the unexplained and the inscrutable. Hence the repeated “*Why*,” “*Wherefore*,” and “*How long*” cry of the Psalmist. The latter has been called “Faith’s mighty question,” as it is really a confession that wrong cannot be permanent in a universe presided over by one whose throne is based on Justice and Right.

We ought to be thankful that we have in Scripture not only the Hallelujah shouts of the saints, their witness to the divine faithfulness, veracity, truth, and unfailing goodness; but that we have also their groans, sighs, breakdowns in faith recorded, when sun, moon, and stars were hidden from sight, when the powers of heaven were shaken, and they were left apparently forsaken on the heavings and tossings of doubt and despair.

Take, for instance, the book of Jeremiah, the most autobiographical book in the Old Testament. It is largely a diary of a man’s conversations with his God. Here was a man with the sensitive temperament of an artist, a poet, a student, yet made the storm center in one of the most perplexing periods of history, when everything seemed out of gear in church and state, when every institution went down into wrack and ruin. For some forty years he stood his ground for the holiness and truth of Jehovah and for

the certainty of coming judgment upon temple, throne, and nation, against the "peace, peace" preaching of false prophets, the corrupt and covetous priests, the princes who regarded him as a dangerous pacifist, and the unthinking crowd swayed by the clever slogans of self-seeking demagogues. To them he was "an iron pillar and a brazen wall." But not so when alone with God. Read his outpourings of heart (chapter twelve): "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" Or chapter fifteen: "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" What language, we might well say, to use with God! Or take the book of Job, and listen to a saint stripped of wealth, family, health, and worst of all, of reputation, by his friends, cursing the day of his birth, and crying out of confusion and anguish against what seemed to him injustice in God's government, hidden behind the cloud.

But these Old Testament saints at least stood up to their doubts and perplexities, until the ghosts were laid, and they emerged into the sunshine again. And we are permitted to be eavesdroppers, as it were, catching them alone with God when pouring out their heart in His presence, whatever that heart contained of wild, untamed, undisciplined clamorings or of dark misgivings in the presence of terrifying enigmas. Do we not feel that we and they are men of like passions and need the same teaching that had the last word with them in their wrestlings with their problems? Their world was after all much like ours. In externals it may have differed. But in fundamentals it has not changed. Still does the human

heart cry out for love, the mind for truth, the spirit like a dove for a home and a resting place. Still do we protest against might crushing right; against the stultifying of personality from being an end in itself to be a means to an end, in the interests of tyrants, whether of individual autocrats or of a state stepping beyond its God-appointed bounds. Still do we inly feel that life is neither a comedy nor a tragedy; that infinite wisdom, one with infinite goodness, is life's potter; that not stern unbending law, nor blind fate, nor uncertain caprice, but sovereign love, bends over the wheel of life in its revolutions, shaping and moulding us, making and remaking, until at last, blessed be His Name! we come forth as vessels to His praise answering to the design of His master mind.

There are serious problems dealt with in the book of Psalms. There is the problem of pain, the mystery of suffering, particularly of the righteous! There is the shadow of death, an enemy as yet undefeated! There is the strange overthrow of the cause of God, as it seemed to the natural mind, when the heathen entered the House where His honor dwelt, and destroyed it! There is the cry out of the depths of self-discovery in the light of the divine holiness; the cry of repentance and penitence; the problem of moral evil! There is the hiding of the Face of God from one who has found in Himself his supreme treasure; His strange silence to His worshiper, who feels lonely and bereaved without God as Friend and Guide; who is conscious that the world is a dry and thirsty land where no water is; so that God alone is the source of his happiness, and the veiling of His

radiant countenance an intolerable exile from the home of the soul!

The psalmist could not get the full answer to his anxious inquiries in his day. That awaited the coming of Him who is the Light of the world. His cross is indeed the key to all mystery. Strange that it should be so, for to the natural mind it is utter darkness and the greatest mystery of all, even defeat and disaster, the triumph of hate, the victory of evil over good. But to faith, it is full of light, the highest peak of love, patience, meekness, unselfishness, renunciation. It is the defeat of the powers of darkness. It is the laying of the sure foundation on which the hopes of humanity can rest and the universal reign of God be established.

These things awaited "the fulness of the time" when God sent forth His Son and then sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

This has changed everything for us. But nevertheless light was given to the perplexed people of God in the pre-Christian age; if not all the light, yet sufficient light to travel by to the city which God is building for His own. But the things that happened to *them* are recorded for *our* learning. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). God had *us* in view in recording their spiritual heights and depths, their discipline and education, their sorrows and their joys, their defeats and their triumphs, their doubts and their jubilant certainties, that we through comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

* * * *

Since writing the above the world has been startled by a recrudescence of medieval brutality visited upon defense-

less people of Jewish origin. Israel, the *mater dolorosa* among the nations, must still wear the thorny crown of martyrdom. Still is the "How long!" cry wrung from her tortured breast. The words of Bishop T. T. Steward Perowne, in his introduction to his scholarly expositions of the Book of Psalms, might have been written as a comment on recent events. He says, speaking of the sufferings of the Jews in Christendom in the middle ages:

"The savage and unrelenting persecution of the Jews has left an indelible blot on the pages of Christian history from the beginning of the 11th century to the middle of the 16th. There is not a European nation, scarcely a European town of any magnitude, the annals of which are not disgraced by the intolerable cruelties practiced on this people. Popes, Fathers and Councils vied with one another in denouncing them. No insult was too coarse for them; Jew and devil were synonymous terms in the Christian vocabulary; they were outside the pale of humanity. Again and again the fury of the populace was let loose upon them; their houses were plundered, their property confiscated, their wives and children violated before their eyes. Great multitudes were tortured and cruelly put to death. Their *Selichoth*, or Synagogue hymns, for centuries were one great wail going up to heaven, a bitter lamentation, a burden of weeping and great mourning, as of Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted."

What is the real reason back of this modern attack on the Jewish nation? The answer is given in Rev. 12:13—The Dragon hates and persecutes "the woman that brought forth the man-child (Messiah)." It is the old enmity of the

serpent against the chosen vessel through which the Bruiser of his head was born into the world. But God uses the wrath of the dragon for His own purposes touching His people, as Joseph dealt with his brethren in the time of famine, speaking roughly to them, accusing them of being spies, accusing them of being thieves, allowing the cup to be found in innocent Benjamin's sack, in order to awaken their slumbering consciences about the dark deed in the background of their lives, till they cried: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," as their sin rose up before them, like a specter out of the grave of the past. This is the true inwardness of the wicked persecution of the Jews.

Many grievous charges have been and are being made against the Jews—the infamous blood accusations, that they poisoned the wells, that they have a secret council plotting against every nation, are but a few. But behind all these slanders is not only the wrath of Satan, but the divine purpose to bring Israel to that place where He can bless them in and under the Messiah, Israel's noblest Son.

Israel is indeed a chosen nation, but as Jehovah declared in the book of Isaiah: "*Chosen . . . in the furnace of affliction.*" And though that affliction seems long drawn out, and much of it undeserved, they will come out of the crucible of pain, a purified and God-glorifying people in whom His election will be justified and His dealings with them vindicated before all.

In the meantime, an exercised remnant in Israel will learn from the Psalms the sympathies of Him who was preëminently "a Man of Sorrow and acquainted with grief," who in all their afflictions was afflicted with them, whose language

of faith and hope abounds in the Psalms, and who walks with His own through the fire, even when seven times heated by their enemies.

The Psalms thus understood by these “hidden ones” in Israel will furnish them with the very words they can utter in the ear of Jehovah, who said: “*Take with you words,*” and has provided the words He wants His people to take to Him. He will make them glad according to the days wherein He has afflicted them, and wherein they have seen evil. For *His work* will appear to His servants, and *His glory* unto their children; the beauty of the Lord their God will be upon them, and the work of their hands will be divinely established and not have been wrought in vain (Ps. 90: 15-17).

II

The Problem of the Apparent Defeat of God

THAT the exile, the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Dwelling Place of Jehovah's Name meant the victory of paganism over the God of Israel, must have caused agony of heart to the pious Israelite. The candlestick lit in Israel had gone out in the midst of heathen darkness! How the faithful in Israel must have felt this disgrace, having clung pathetically to the doctrine of the inviolability of Zion, blessedly true for the days of Isaiah, when they saw Zion go up in flames in the days of Jeremiah. The word of the Lord *then* was that judgment must do its strange work, and that the glory must forsake its former home.

At the back of the minds of not a few in those days was the idea that every nation had her own gods; Moab had her Chemosh; Philistia, her Dagon; Tyre, her Baal and Ashteroth; Babylon, her Bel and Nebo; while Israel might have her Jehovah! The prophets declaimed against this limiting of the Holy One of Israel. He was no mere tribal deity. Behind the changes and upheavals in the world inside and outside Israel, were the operations of His hand, often using the very heathen to chastise His people. He was not defeated by the gods of Babylon, even though the holy vessels of His sanctuary had been placed by the Babylonians as trophies of victory in the house of their idols. The exile was part of His own design, and the King of Babylon was, unknown to himself, the servant of the Lord in carrying it out. (See Jer. 25:9.)

But at first the overthrow of the throne of David, the break-up of the nation, the cessation of the Jehovah worship in the Temple He had sanctified by His glory, seemed utter defeat and disaster, and was the darkest mystery that could be imagined. Read only Psalm 60 (R. V.): "O God thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down; thou hast been angry . . . thou hast showed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering . . . thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts." And Psalm 74: "O God, why hast thou cast us off forever? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? . . . Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual ruins, all the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary. Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly; they have set up their ensigns for signs . . . they have profaned the dwelling place of thy name by casting it to the ground . . . How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever?" So also Psalms 79, 80, 89, and 137. No wonder when the captives of Judah sat beside the waters of Babylon, their harps were silent. How could they sing Jehovah's songs in a strange land? Said they: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning . . . Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." It was a deeply religious patriotism that stirred their hearts. Did they not represent a discredited and disgraced cause? How could they sing Zion's songs when the children of Zion were in captivity?

But that was only a passing mood, the first reaction of their hearts, filled with bitterness and despair. How small

must the captive Jew have felt amid the skyscrapers of Babylon when in an idol procession Bel and Nebo were carried through the crowded streets, while the heathen mocking him said: "Where is now thy God?" Idolatry blatant and exultant, and he representing a defeated God!

But he rallied from that despair. The exile had been prepared for in the ministry of Jeremiah, in whose time the long-lost Book of the Law was found again in the Temple on the eve of the exile. That Book was all that was left to them from their lost inheritance. Throne, temple, nationality, and land were gone *but the Book remained*. That Book became their solace and stay, their sheet anchor and support. From it they derived hope and courage, yea, faith to turn the exile into profit. They had lost their earthly home. The Scriptures now became the home of their lonely hearts. The prophet Ezekiel, the pastor of the exiles by the banks of the Chebar, also assured them that *the abiding Presence of Jehovah Himself* would now take the place of the vanished Temple (Ezk. 11:16). They had lost the outward shell only; the substance was still theirs. They had indeed obtained, as some one put it, "a portable religion," one they carried into the heathen world. God needed not a dwelling made with hands. His Presence could not be confined within the frontiers of a particular "holy land." The formerly rejected ministry of Jeremiah, the prophet of the new covenant, was better understood now; that which mattered most was man's personal relations with God, a heart acquainted with Him, direct, immediate, personal, first-hand knowledge with Him; and if Israel could not now be a political power among the nations, it could be a holy congregation, a people of God,

when an exercised remnant was permitted to return and build a new home and temple amid the ashes of the old.

Thus was the exile a means of bringing that day nearer when the Messiah could tell a woman of Samaria: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshipers. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." There is no doubt that the synagogues, which now sprung up in exile, for the study of the long-neglected Law and the despised prophetic writings, became the historical link between the outward Temple destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the spiritual House, composed of living stones, out from among all nations, founded on faith in Christ risen from the dead as Son of the living God, even the Church which He has purchased with His own blood. For the Church universal began in the Jewish synagogue. That is why the Apostle Paul, sent to the Gentiles, always went to the synagogue first. There he found a prepared people, a people taught by the Scriptures to look for the very things he announced. As the synagogue was the daughter of the exile, so she in turn became the spiritual mother of the Church, while the book of Psalms became the hymnbook of the second temple, that house into which the blessed Babe of Bethlehem was taken to be presented, and where He was hailed as the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.

In Psalm 80 the psalmist faces the humiliation of the breakdown of everything set up for a testimony in Israel.

The vine brought out of Egypt had been wasted by the boar out of the wood and devoured by the wild beast of the field. The branch God had made strong for Himself was burnt with fire. But faith had learned to see beyond the present to the future. A penitent people became acquainted with the divine counsels concerning the Man God would bring in to take up everything in which man has failed, or which the enemy has ruined. And so the psalmist cries out: "Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee." The God of ancient Israel, who is our God also, is never defeated.

III

The Problem of Sin

THE most profound exercise that ploughed up the soul of the Old Testament people of God was that of the discovery of sin, the problem in a man's own breast. No other is so frequently voiced in the devotional literature of ancient Israel. Thus the Psalms are shot through and through with the note of penitence.

The phenomenon of penitence is one peculiar to the spiritual experience of the God seekers recorded in the Holy Scripture. We shall not find anything approaching it in the pagan world outside of Israel. For the sense of sin is begotten when man comes in contact with the holiness of God. Polytheism and Pantheism are destructive of the moral sense. The first reduces sin to a mere breach of ceremonial etiquette. The ethical contact is lacking. The second denies any relations with a personal God, hence in pantheistic thought there cannot be divine sanctions for the difference between good and evil. But the Living God, who had revealed Himself to Israel, had impressed the fact of His ethical elevation, His holiness, upon His people. To come into moral conformity to His will alone made worship of such a Being possible. It was the sense of inability to measure up to the divine requirements that plunged the true people of God into acute distress.

Now one of the things that strikes us in the reading of the Old Testament, particularly of the Book of Psalms, is the very serious view it takes of moral evil. The world in

which *we* are living has gone into fearful lengths in departing from the Bible view of sin. People have invented all kinds of euphonisms for that which really brings death in its train. Worldliness is called smart society. Scripture calls the love of the world adultery. Pride is called wholesome self-respect. Scripture tells us that God is not on speaking terms with a proud man; He knows him afar off. Licensiveness in youth is called "sowing wild oats," and covetousness, which God stigmatizes as idolatry, prudence and thrift. In Holy Scripture sin is that abominable thing which God hates. And so it is also felt to be where the new life has been generated by the grace of God operating within man; the life which longs for holiness, purity, conformity to the image of God, and for the unclouded vision of His face.

In the Psalms we have three words which give us a diagnosis of moral evil, impossible to improve by the terms of modern psychology. Both in Psalm 51, in which we hear the wail of a soul newly awakened to the awfulness of separation from the divine Presence because of guilt, and in Psalm 32, in which the agony of repentance has been followed by the abiding state of penitence, the changes are rung on the terrible nature of "Transgression," "Sin," and "Iniquity." In what a different atmosphere we find ourselves there to that modern world in which men glibly speak of sin as a "complex" or as "the delusion of the mortal mind!"

Transgression is clearly the breach of a definite prohibition, the trespassing of a boundary line, and thus a getting on to danger ground. Sin is the same word as that used for missing the mark. A man is a sinner if he fails to come up

to the standard, even though he may have aimed at it. So Romans 3:23: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Iniquity is another way of spelling inequity, that which is out of plumb, off the straight, the twist created by moral evil in man, like the word "wrong" which comes from the same root as the word "wrung." Sin has made a caricature of man. It has debased him. He has sunk below the level of his original creature standing. God's handiwork has been marred.

There is a fourth word added in Psalm 32, that of "guile." Now guile simply means deceit, and here the worst kind of deceit, self-deceit. "Blessed is the man," said the psalmist, "in whose spirit there is no guile." It is *a man who is honest with himself*. As long as there is guile in the spirit, there is no hope. The sinner is, as it were, in the condemned cell; there is nothing but the fearful looking for of judgment, the hand of God pressing him down by day and night. It is by confession that the guile is got rid of. For sins which man covers, God must uncover to his shame. Sins which man uncovers in repentance, God covers up.

It was along the line of self-judgment that the Old Testament penitent found peace about his sins. "I confessed . . . thou forgavest." There was no long probation. Pardoning love met him at once. The story of the prodigal son is found imbedded in the Book of Psalms. While he was a great way off, the father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. It is true that the sin-atoning sacrifice had not yet been offered. For the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins. But God foreknew it. It was ever present to Him, yea, from

the foundation of the world. It was on the ground of the sprinkled blood of Christ that sins could be forgiven in Old Testament times. Not that men saw the blood. But God saw it, and that is the true ground of acceptance. "*When I see the blood*, I will pass over you." The full joy of it awaited the public testimony of the gospel, that God had raised from the dead the One who had been delivered for our offences, though the Old Testament penitent, as yet without that blessed testimony, found peace when he experienced in the hour of repentance and confession the kiss of God. And to this the Apostle Paul bears witness in Romans 3: 24-26: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath *set forth* to be a propitiation (i.e., a mercy-seat, and one not hidden behind the unrent veil) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins *that are past* ('*done afore-time*') through the forbearance of God; to declare . . . *at this time* his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The value of the death of Christ in meeting the claims of the divine throne in its holiness, reached back into the generations preceding, as it reaches forward into the generations still unborn. It provided the one sure foundation on which God could in consistency with Himself forgive sin and receive the penitent sinner into favor again.

IV

The Mystery of the Silence of God

ONE of the deepest problems which the Psalmist had to face, and with which we also have to reckon, is the withdrawal, as it appears, of the favor and smile of God which once made life glad and worth while.

To have walked in the sunshine, and then to find oneself plunged into darkness; to have trodden the high places of communion, and then to feel deserted of divine good in a depressing valley; to have had love-messages from home on life's pathway, and then to look up into a silent heaven, are perplexing experiences that challenge the heart and call for an explanation.

Of course where there has been carelessness or sin; where the life is consciously at odds with God about His appointments or His revealed will, the answer is clear. The Father is putting His child under discipline. But I am speaking of one whose heart is set on pleasing God, and who walks day by day with an uncondemning conscience. It is intolerable for such an one to feel the withdrawal of that sweetness which made the pleasures of sin bitter to the taste. And yet such has often been the experience of the people of God.

This strange phenomenon binds the children of faith of all dispensations into one family, as face answers to face. It is one of the problems which produced many of the psalms. Not only in green pastures were psalms written, but in the valley of the shadow of death also. Not only on

the heights did the soul sing; it cried out of the depths as well. Not only at a prepared table before an overflowing cup did the soul sit; penury and want in like manner exercised it. The soul has to learn summer and winter, day and night, and that God has made them both; so that cloudy skies as well as sunshine have their message and meaning in the education of the surrendered life (Ps. 74: 16, 17).

When a soul is first drawn by its divine Lover out of the follies of sin and the vanities of time, to seek the blessedness that is in Him alone, it gets many encouragements. The experience of conversion is frequently accompanied by tokens of heavenly favor. There are remarkable answers to prayer. There may be a miraculous demonstration of divine leadings. There is a wonderful sweetness in approach to God. The Bible becomes a wonderful book, a land flowing with milk and honey; the fellowship of God's people, a holy joy; life, a perpetual song. All this helps the newborn soul to break with its past. When the world would allure, like "Madam Bubble with her painted cheek and her ruby cup," the soul, newly converted, says:

"O worldly pomp and glory,
Thy charms are spread in vain;
I've heard a sweeter story,
I've found a truer gain."

Thus we need not fear for the young convert that he will backslide. It is the older sheep that more often go astray. The lambs are carried in the bosom of the Good Shepherd.

It is after a while, when the honeymoon experience has become a golden dream of the past, that the test comes. Old

temptations revive. Old lusts lift up their heads again. Old worldly tastes cry for satisfaction. And the soul is left apparently unsupported by the sweetnesses and caresses which accompanied the early stages of its acquaintance with the Lord. It has now to learn to walk by faith alone; to trust in the dark without a ray of light to support it; to refuse to doubt in the dark what it has seen so clearly in the light. The old saints used to call this experience "the dark night of the soul." The Psalmist called it the weaning process. (See Psalm 131.)

The weaning of a child is a painful but necessary stage in its life, and it has its counterpart in spiritual experience. If the weaning child could speak, what would it say? It would charge its mother with cruelty. It cannot understand her ways. Why does she now withhold that which gave her such delight once to bestow? The child becomes fractious and irritable. It clamors for that which must no longer be enjoyed. Even the mother suffers in sympathy with her babe. But how blessed when the *weaning* child has become a *weaned* child. It goes to sleep on the very breast that has been denied. So the Psalmist:

"Lord, my heart is not haughty,
Nor mine eyes lofty:
Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
Or in things too high for me.

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,
As a child that is weaned of his mother:
My soul is even as a weaned child.

"Let Israel hope in the Lord
From henceforth and for ever."

Thus the ancient poet, inspired by light divine, describes the deeper rest that follows the ceasing from trusting to emotions, feelings, ecstasies, manifestations of supernormal phenomena, miracles, and signs. Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord. Once His gifts, now Himself who is greater than all His gifts. The cynical sneer of Satan: "Does Job serve God for nought?" is answered. Yes, God can win the confidence, love, faith, worship, and service of His own, even though they are stripped of all outward signs of His favor. Job, bereft of his family, his wealth, his health, held on to his integrity, worshiping the God whom he trusted, even though He slew him. And was not this also the victory of the cross? Did the holy, silent Lamb of God have one ray of light to encourage Him? Was not hell defeated then, by His faith and obedience to the uttermost?

The saint whom God would lead into deeper apprehensions of Himself, must enter the strange fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the loneliness and darkness and hunger and thirst of the cross. In Atonement the death of Christ stands alone, for in that the Son of God sunk into deeper depths of soul-exercise than His most intimate followers could ever know. He endured the wrath of God against sin. But there is an entering into sympathy with Him in His cross experiences, beyond which lies the power of His resurrection. Yet as we are brought into this darkness, we need fear no evil, for He is with us there, as much as when we were made to lie down in pastures of tender grass. We emerge stronger in the Lord and in the power of His might, which is made perfect in human weakness. We are no longer like babes easily affected by every wind that blows.

We have learned that the very silence of God has a voice, as our Lord shewed in the garden. The Father's silence to His prayer: "If it be possible . . ." was accepted in holy resignation in the words: "Thy will be done." Our Lord triumphed in Gethsemane in the meekness of a weaned child. Not that He ever needed the weaning process. But He accepted deliverance from the "power of darkness" that made His spotless soul sorrowful even unto death, *in resurrection*. He was heard in that He "feared," that is, because of His "piety" that left all in the Father's hands.

The Unexplained Mystery of Death

ONE of the most baffling problems with which the Old Testament saint had to grapple was the mystery that enshrouded for him the "Beyond" the portals of death. Hebrews 2:15 tells us that they were "all their lifetime subject to bondage" "through fear of death." We see this in the way in which such a true saint as Job spoke of his dying: "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (Job 10:20-22). I think none of my readers would like any of these words to be read at his funeral.

Several Psalms are tinged with this pessimistic outlook, seeing that the time had not yet come when it could be proclaimed that the Captain of our salvation had met and overcome him who had the power of death, that is the devil; slaying death by means of death, that He might deliver His people from the fear of death, so that we need no longer lament with the Psalmist: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. 115:17); for He "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (incorruptibility) to light through the gospel," and in resurrection life become the Firstfruits of His sleeping saints. We now know a love from which neither death nor life can separate us—

“Love which in death’s dark vale
Its sweetest odors spread;
Where death o’er all seemed to prevail,
Its brightest glory shed.”

What a difference the death and resurrection of our Lord has made! Could we imagine a greater contrast than between the language of Hezekiah and that of the martyr Stephen? Let Isaiah 38 and Acts 7 be read together. Both have the same Jerusalem for their background. Both present to us sons of Israel noted for their godliness. But one wept sore at the thought of leaving the sunny life he knew on earth for the uncertainties and gloom of Sheol, where he could no longer “see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living”; “for the grave,” said he, “cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee.” The other passed on with shining face, reflecting the glory of Him who had entered the heavenly world as his Forerunner, and Who stood ready to receive his ransomed spirit, and Whom he so beautifully represented by the forgiving love that filled his heart in the hour of martyrdom.

However, the Psalmist was not satisfied with a disturbing uncertainty. Study Psalms 16, 49, and 88, and see how he wrestled with this enigma, until light came; not the full light which shines for faith from the empty tomb on the morning of the resurrection of our Lord, but enough light to be a comfort to him as he journeyed onward, even though the shadows deepened and the waters of death began to lap around his feet.

It was felt by him that death and the grave could not be the last word after a life of devoted surrender to the will

of God and communion with Him. For why does God take such pains to win man? Surely not only for man's sake, but for the gratification of His own affections! God seeks human friendship. He makes the first overtures. He says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." And does He find it easy to secure that yearned-for love of the human heart? Nay, verily, seeing man's freedom of choice must be taken into account. Love which has been forced is no real love. It must be spontaneous, an upspringing fountain out of a willing heart. And thus divine love waits, laying siege to our hearts, pleading, wooing, drawing, using every artifice love can devise, short of actual compulsion, till we capitulate to our Divine Lover.

Now suppose death ends this love-relationship between God and man; would not God also be the loser? He has lost His hardly-won friend! Such a prospect is unthinkable. There must be a blissful future for the lover of God where the vision of His radiant face is no longer dimmed by earth-born clouds, where the heart finds at last what it has loved so long, but only fitfully enjoyed. So Asaph in Psalm 73 says: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and *afterward receive me to glory*. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." So also the singer in one of the Korahitic Psalms (49) says: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: *for he shall receive me*"; words which have obtained a new and richer content for us in the language of our Lord: "I will receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also." And that we

need not wait till the resurrection to be lifted into the closer fellowship with our Lord, the words of Stephen prove, when he looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw his glorified Lord there, and addressed Him with these words: "Lord Jesus, *receive my spirit.*"

Thus also the great Messianic utterance of the 16th Psalm. There we find the Messiah in His humanity living the faithful life of His people, the Author and Finisher of that life, through suffering, poverty, reproach, loneliness, homelessness, friendlessness, and even through death. He made it a radiant life of beauty and victory, in His unbroken confidence in God and step-by-step communion with Him in the path of His appointing. Could such a life terminate in the grave? Listen to His glowing utterance: "I have set Jehovah always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. *Therefore* my heart (spirit) is glad, and my glory (soul) rejoiceth: my flesh (body) also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." For it is eternal life to know God. Communion with God belongs to a heavenly realm beyond the reach of death. And this Psalm which enshrines this fundamental truth, while in its last analysis Messianic, nevertheless bears witness to the exercise of the Psalmist who wrote it, and to the triumphant culmination of the life of faith and surrender to the divine will. And that our Lord endorsed this confident hope of His exercised people before His Advent when they were challenged by the mystery of death, is clear from the

use He made of the words: "I *am* the God of Abraham . . ." to the cavilling Sadducees who denied the resurrection life: "He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Not alone beneath the stars of Mamre did Abraham commune with God as a man communes with his friend, but now, long gathered to his fathers, Abraham is "the friend of God" still.

So we may boldly adopt the language of the 23d Psalm: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," when the last long mile has been covered on the pilgrim way to the city of God.

VI

The Battlements of Zion

IN THE Psalms Zion is the immovable city of God, the metropolis of His world-wide reign. The earthly Zion is idealized. Whatever her varying fortunes, that of which she is the symbol abides forever. Now Zion did not come into view till everything God had set up as a testimony in Israel had failed: priesthood in the house of Eli, the monarchy in the hands of Saul; the Ark in captivity and afterwards neglected for many years in Kiriath-Jearim, etc. *Then* came David, God's chosen vessel, who wrested Zion, the stronghold of the Jebusites which had defied Israel since Joshua's days, out of their hands, and made it the capital of a united Israel. When the Ark was installed there, the conquest of the land was complete (see Ps. 78:65-72). The man of God's choice and the city of His choice thus appeared together (Ps. 132). Zion stands for the victory of Grace after man had been thoroughly exposed. We see this triumphant grace in the Risen Christ, the One who is the theme of the second Psalm, saluted as Son of God in resurrection, and set on God's holy hill of Zion as His King, who will, in the time appointed, possess the uttermost parts of the earth. He is God's resource in view of human failure, and faith's resource also, whatever the raging of the nations or the imaginations of the peoples. God's Christ sits at His right hand biding His time. And if He who sits in heaven laughs at the impotence of His enemies, His people can afford to laugh also.

In the Psalms Zion is seen prophetically to be the spiritual mother of the nations. Five of them are mentioned by name in Psalm 87, once the deadly enemies of Zion and of what Zion stood for. Rahab (i. e., Egypt), Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia are spoken of as among them that know the Lord (verse 4, R. V.). The five enemies of Zion personify the various ways in which the grace of God is opposed. *Rahab* stands for pride; *Babylon*, for corruption under demon influences; *Philistia*, for profession without inward life and power; *Tyre*, for covetousness; *Ethiopia*, for indulgence of the flesh. But here we see grace superabounding where sin has abounded. It is when Zion becomes the mother of a new-born Israel (Isaiah 54:1-3; 66:7), that the Gentiles will turn to her also (Isaiah 60:4). She will then have to enlarge her tent to make room for them (Isaiah 54:1-3). The Gentiles will then have become the children of Zion. "Jehovah will count, when He writeth up the peoples. This one was born there" (Ps. 87:6).

All this is realized in the church today in anticipation of that which will be revealed in "the world to come" when the Son of man has His rights universally. According to Eph. 2:19 Gentiles are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints," incorporated in the commonwealth of Israel. They have "come to Mount Zion," in which are the hidden springs of life which will yet irrigate the whole world (Ps. 87:7). In the midst of the natural system of things grace has set up a supernatural order. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it. "Let mount Zion rejoice . . . walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bul-

warks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following" (Ps. 48:11-13). The battlements of Zion stand. The efforts of the enemy to overthrow her have been in vain. The doctrines of grace, the means of grace, the provisions of the glad tidings of grace, are with us still. Not a stone has been dislodged. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and have never been withdrawn. Neither have the earlier divine revelations leading up to the advent of the Incarnate Word been superseded. They are all maintained in the church. Israel's spiritual treasures are in this present dispensation in her keeping. She is the custodian of the deposit of truth once committed to Israel, to whom pertaineth the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the service of God, the promises, the fathers, and of whom Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever (Rom. 9:4-5). For God never gives up His purpose. The vessel of testimony may be for the moment among the Gentiles, but the gifts and calling of God are not repented of. A tribulated and penitent Israel will yet come with singing to Zion and everlasting joy upon her head. The salvation of Israel, the apostle to the Gentiles tells us, will come out of Zion, when "the fulness of the Gentiles has come in." Not from Mount Sinai, where the Law was given, will Israel's salvation come, but from the Mount which speaks of the victory of grace established in the rejected Christ raised from the dead.

From Israel the Gentiles have received the truths of the Unity and Holiness of the Divine Being; the supremacy of goodness, rather than ritual; the infinite value of human personality; the sacredness of the family as a unit before

God; the hallowing of history, that it has a goal: the Kingdom of God; the spirituality of true worship, as seen in the second of the ten commandments; the Messianic hope, fulfilled in the One who according to the flesh came of and to Israel, to whom that nation will yet say with Thomas, who would not believe unless he saw the print of the nails: "My Lord and My God!" when they too look upon Him whom they have pierced.

These are the battlements of Zion, faith's defences against the assaults of hell. Psalm 125 tells us that they who trust in the Lord become as stable as Mount Zion which cannot be moved. When the ground shakes beneath the feet of men, "The precious sons of Zion" are kept steady (Psalm 46), knowing that Zion is the place where "God commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133).

VII

The Courts of Jehovah

IT IS not easy for us to recapture the spirit of enthusiasm in the heart of a godly Israelite for the temple. The sanctuary was more to him than the building where the tribes assembled for their annual celebrations. It was the place where God's honor dwelt. The Glory Presence, which in the pillar of cloud and fire had brought Israel out of Egypt, protected them against the pursuit of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, led them to Sinai and then into the land of promise, had filled that temple. It was enthroned between the cherubim over-shadowing the mercy-seat. No wonder their heart and their flesh longed for the courts of the favored spot where the Living God Himself had taken up His abode on earth (Ps. 84: 1-4).

This explains also their bitterness of despair when that house was destroyed and Jehovah's worshipers had become captives among the pagans. Psalm 137 records their feelings as they sat by the rivers of Babylon. Their harps were silent. How could they sing Jehovah's song in a land whose gods had triumphed over Jehovah! At least that is what their cruel captors suggested: "Where is now thy God?" He has neither house nor worshiper left! Bel and Nebo have vanquished Him (Ps. 42: 10).

But a heaven-sent messenger came among these depressed captives of Judah, a pastor-prophet, Ezekiel by name. He tells us that he "sat where they sat" for seven days in the eloquence of silent sympathy; entering into their feelings;

not berating them because of their unbelieving despair, but lovingly taking their perplexities upon his heart. And lo! the heavens opened over him, and he saw visions of God (Ezk. 1).

Thus Ezekiel made a great discovery. Jehovah was with His people in exile; His throne was near to them, and on that throne, in the amber glory, was "the likeness as the appearance of Man," deeply interested in the sorrows and sufferings of the godly remnant whom He was educating and training for a future testimony, even through the sharp discipline of the exile. Hovering over the dejected and despairing captives, who thought all was lost, was the very Glory which once had filled the temple at Jerusalem.

Moreover, Ezekiel had a message to bring to them out of that Glory which had been opened to his prophetic eye. "Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezk. 11:16).

So they learned to transfer their affections from the outward and visible to the inward and unseen. The shadow was gone, but the substance remained. *Jehovah Himself* would be to them what the temple once had been. His Presence could be enjoyed even in captivity, in spiritual communion with Him. The *externalia* of the ancient order were not the *essentials*. A contrite heart means more to God than a gold-covered edifice. Patience and faith mean more than ritual. God is Spirit. He seeks spiritual worshipers. It was through agony and defeat, through shame and disgrace that a remnant in Judah was enabled to learn

this truth. But the loss proved their gain in spiritual apprehension and experience.

Did not the disciples of our Lord have to go through similar exercises? It was not easy for them to adjust their minds to the removal from sight of that loved Person, who had become more to them than the dearest earthly ties, and whose word had delivered them from the authority of their learned scribes. But His departure meant no backward step. It was expedient for them that a cloud should receive Him "*out of their sight.*" To walk *by faith* while the unseen Paraclete, *with* them collectively and *in* them individually, gave them a clearer vision of their Lord, human and divine, than they had had before, was a tremendous step forward in their spiritual progress.

So we today. We cling to places hallowed by sacred associations. We let our affections go out to channels of divine blessing, to organizations on which His approval has rested, with which His public testimony was identified. Then God rolls death on them all, and like Jonah we mourn over the withered gourd that has comforted us. But is not God greater than His gifts? When our Cheriths dry up, is not the fountain of life with Him? Do we miss the stars when the sun rises? Have His courts been destroyed; His holy vessels been carried to Babylon; the vine He planted been burnt with fire; the throne of His glory been disgraced? Then let us seek *Him* more earnestly, who only removes the intervening medium of His Self-revelation lest it should become an obscuring veil, whose desire is that His people might know Him, beyond symbols and signs, even "face to face," without a veil between.

VIII

The Secret of Happiness

HAPPINESS is what all the world is seeking after. But there is nothing more elusive than the pursuit of happiness, for happiness is ever a by-product and escapes those who make it their objective. You might as well try and catch up with the rainbow.

Another mistake is to confound happiness with pleasure. The poet said truly :

“Pleasures are like poppies spread ;
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed ;
Or like the snowflake on the river,
A moment white, then gone forever ;
Or like the borealis rays,
Vanishing amid the maze.”

But happiness is of another quality. It has been defined as “correspondence with environment.” The reason mankind is unhappy is that the human race has got away from its proper home in God. The misery of man cannot be removed by education or legislation. The malady is too deep to be philosophized away. In God alone can man be happy.

This is the teaching of the Book of Psalms. It begins with the description of the happy man. The word “blessed” is the Old English for the modern “happy.” He is a man who is found in unbroken communion with God, walking in holy separation from evil, meditating day and night in His Law, i. e.—His revealed will,—finding his delight in it, and

letting his secret root-life sink down into the life of God. We know only One has measured up to this ideal. Jesus lived the life of the first Psalm.

But if happiness is impossible for us as sinful men, a door into it is opened in Ps. 32. "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." As sin is the disturber of real happiness, the drop of bitterness in life's sweetest cup, the thorn in life's downiest pillow, the shadow on life's fairest landscape, so the removal of sin is the secret of happy relations with God and of a life in which one drinks of "the river of His pleasures."

This removal of sin, as a burden on the conscience, the Psalmist is careful to point out comes after a painful exercise, comparable to a sitting in the condemned cell. Day and night the hand of God lies heavy on the soul. Finally, the guile is pressed out by confession. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord"—and then six months' probation? Nay, verily: "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." It is the father's kiss assuring the penitent of his welcome. "Sins which we cover," said a holy man of my acquaintance, "God must uncover. But sins which we uncover, God covers up."

This is the first taste of real happiness which comes to man—but there is a deeper experience. The psalmist goes on to speak of God not only as his *Justifier*, but as his *Home*.

"For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found." This shows that there

will be a time when men will not be able to find God, as when the flood came and cut short the preaching of Noah. Then the ark was his refuge. So the psalmist: "Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him. *Thou art my hiding place*; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." God not only "justifieth the *ungodly*," but the justified man, a "godly" man now (for he sides with God against his sins, and accepts God's testimony concerning the one "delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification") learns to "*joy in God*." God becomes his spirit's present home. (Comp. Rom. 5: 1-11). The godly man prays now. In the condemned cell he could only groan. It is the prayer of communion, for he does not *ask* for anything, he makes a grand affirmation: "Thou art my hiding place." It is God Himself he rejoices in, not in his being a forgiven man. He hides in God and no longer from Him.

But his cup of happiness is not yet full. Mystical rapture does not cover the whole of our experience. We have to go through the pathless desert where drought abides; where Satan shoots fiery darts at us; where we are exposed to the serpent's bite; where we find out the meanness of our natural hearts. But like the psalmist on the bosom of love divine, we are re-assured. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." And so we may know not only the hidden life with God, but have divine guidance and protection amidst the dangers and perplexities of our outward circumstances.

But is there really such a thing as divine guidance? Many

have claimed it and made a fiasco of their claims. But may there not be a reason? That there is a danger of mistaking our guidance is clearly indicated in the psalm under consideration, for a *warning* is added to the *promise*: "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, or else they will not come near unto thee" (Psalm 32:9). Not the emotions then, but the *understanding* is the medium through which light from heaven reaches us. Not that the emotions are ruled out altogether. They also are divinely created. The emotions furnish driving force for action. But the understanding must direct the emotions, or else they will run amuck.

Now the horse is a very emotional creature, particularly if it is a thoroughbred. He finds it hard to stand still. "Be ye not as the horse." Wait God's time. School the wild heart to be calm. God speaks to us "in the cool of the evening," when a hush falls on our spirits. But the mule has an emotion exactly the opposite, which he inherits from the ass to which he is related. Do not stubbornly hang back when the word is: "Go forward." There are right hand and left hand dangers—to rush before our Guide or to lag behind our conscience. A son, intelligent in the mind of the father, can be guided by the tender glances of his eye. The horse and the mule need the bit and bridle.

When we have found in God pardoning love and justifying grace; when He has become the home of our souls; when He has the direction of our path, the control of our daily life deliberately placed in His hands; when the horse or the mule in us is practically displaced, so that in nearness

to God we can get the guidance of His eye; *then* we have discovered, at last, the secret of happiness, which we can invite others to share with us. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

IX

The Mystical Quest of Israel

THE Psalms may be spoken of as the diary of the inner life of the pre-Christian people of God. They were a seeking people. Not that they were merely seekers, never arriving anywhere. For while it is true that the ultimate and final goal of their souls' pure desire lay in the yet hidden future, many handfuls of purpose were dropped into their lap, as the earnest of the fuller blessing yet to come.

The people of God today living in the light of the reconciliation effected by the death of God's Son, beneath the opened heavens, and in the light of the glory of God unveiled in the face of Jesus Christ, have indeed found what the Old Testament saints hoped for and groped after. For the Person of Christ is the divine answer to every cry out of the depths of our mysterious humanity. Every want in us is a prophecy of Him who can still that want, as the eye calls for the light, and as the river the ocean in which it finds its rest. Nature contains no want for which there is no stilling. So our spiritual yearnings appeal to the One who has called them forth.

We may trace through the Book of Psalms a threefold quest. We meet with a *mystical quest*, the cry for the vision of the Face of God. We observe *an ethical quest*, the passion for righteousness. And finally, we hear the ever-louder growing call for *the Man* who can take up man's defeated cause and be everything that a man should be for God: *the Messianic Quest*.

Divine grace alone can account for these spiritual aspira-

tions in Israel. They evidence that the Spirit of God was at work in the heart of that people. They made Israel unique among the peoples of the ancient world.

The godly in Israel were known as the people who sought the face of God. In the Hebrew, the words for *Presence* and *Face* are the same. As the ancient Hebrews never took kindly to abstract thought, to philosophy and metaphysical speculation, they could not conceive of God in terms of pantheism, as an impersonal life-force. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Old Testament to religious thinking and feeling is its concept of the Divine Personality. He is spoken of as "the Living God," a Being of infinite blessedness and goodness and power, with whom man can come into personal relations. Hence the Presence of God was no abstraction of idealism, but the concrete thought of a Face of radiant glory and love smiling on His people. The true people of God took character from Jacob who saw God's Face at Peniel (Psalm 24:6). No higher bliss could be imagined than the light of God's countenance. It was better than earthly delights (Psalm 4:6, 7). The benediction of the priests could pronounce nothing greater than this (Numbers 6:23-27). When Moses prayed that the Presence of God might accompany him in the long wilderness journey (Ex. 33:12-16), he really asked for the spiritual vision of the Face. The visualizing of that beneficent Face at every turn of the journey would alone make the dreary pathway endurable. Thus he endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Heb. 11:27). It became the keynote of his life. He lived on terms of intimacy with the Lord, as a man communes with his friend, face to face (Num. 12:6-8). Thus also the

man who wrote the 27th Psalm: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." And again: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:4, 8). That Presence, that Face, was felt to be everywhere. It is a searching Presence before which our secret thoughts are open and manifest, and no one can escape its scrutiny (Psalm 139:1-12). To enjoy the smile of that Face was heaven below. Its frown was hell. Men perish, exclaimed another psalmist, at the rebuke of God's countenance (Psalm 80:16).

Some day would that Presence be revealed in manifest glory (Psalm 90:16). The prophets looked forward to the day when the glory of the Lord would be revealed, and all flesh would see it together (Isaiah 40:5). That would be when the Lord rebuilds ruined Zion (Psalm 102:13-16). In that light we can understand the wistful cry of the Apostle Philip on the occasion of the last supper in the upper room: "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us!" He was merely voicing the age-long quest of the godly remnant of Israel for the outshining of the Face of God, for the Theophany that would banish sin, sorrow, suffering, and every wrong from this troubled earth; when God's people would no longer walk by faith, but by sight. And wonderfully blessed was the answer he received. "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

(John 14:7-11). For the quest of the Face points to the Incarnation as its ultimate goal. Philip had been living in the light of the longed-for Theophany and did not know it.

This is also the doctrine of the Apostle Paul. Writing to the Corinthians, he said: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). When God would break forth into glory; when the invisible countenance divine was to become visible; when the divine character was to be set forth, so that men might know God, and knowing Him love Him, trust Him, worship Him, serve Him, delight in Him; He revealed Himself in the terms of a human life and in the beauty and purity of a human Face. Surely he had this in view when He created man in His own image!

And the message of the Face speaks a universal language. It needs no interpreter to make it intelligible. To know God we need but look upon the Face of Jesus. A child can read the meaning of a face, whether it spells goodwill or otherwise. So we do not need philosophy, science, or even theology, to know God. The knowledge of the Father is hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes (Mat. 11:25). The Gospel message is nothing else than an invitation from heaven to look upon that Face, in which the glory of God shines without a veil upon it. God looks upon that Face. We pray with the Psalmist: "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed" (Ps. 84:9). The "Anointed" is the "Messiah," according to the Hebrew. He is *God's* Anointed and *our* Lord. Our peace is founded on the fact that God does not look upon

us but upon Him, and upon us as in Him. We are "accepted in the Beloved." The One who struggled in the darkness of Calvary unto death to redeem us, has so glorified God in the putting away of our sins, that God can place Him in the uncreated glory "far above all heavens," and in the very humanity in which He has died for our sins. When we look where God looks; when we rest where God rests; when we delight where God delights, i.e., in the Person of Christ; then we enter into fellowship with God. We then share the deep joy of the heart of the Father in the Son of His love.

And no one can look upon that Face and remain the same. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This beatific vision is the end of all aspiration. Did not the Psalmist exclaim: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15)?

The Ethical Quest of Israel

THE religious enthusiasm of the Psalmist did not evaporate in emotional self-satisfaction. It was an ethical as well as a mystical response to the divine approach. In this it differed from the pagan cults in the midst of which it bore its solitary testimony. Ethics and religion belonged to different categories there. But the nation of Israel was taught by men who had obtained the vision of the Holy One, whose throne is established on the foundation of righteousness and judgment. To be in harmony with His revealed will became the all-consuming passion of the seeker after Him. For "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance shall behold the upright" (Ps. 11:7).

Sin, being that which casts a shadow upon the relations of happy fellowship with God for which man was originally created as in God's image, became intolerable to him who has made the discovery that the enjoyment of God is man's highest good. There can be no satisfaction to such an one short of the beatific vision, here and now, of the divine countenance *in righteousness* (Ps. 17:15). To miss that vision was called the frown of God, the hiding of His Face, "the rebuke of thy countenance" (Ps. 80:16).

I dare say there was a time in human history when physical strength was regarded as the highest asset. One possessing it in a larger degree than his fellows, like Nimrod, that "mighty hunter before the Lord," might easily become a leader and a king. Thus Nimrod became the first empire-

builder on record (Gen. 10:8-10). But in the onward march of human progress it was found that brains counted for more than brawn. The man of intellect had a decided advantage over the man who had his fist only to fall back upon. So in ancient India and in Greece, wisdom stood for a higher quality than mere brute strength. No age has produced profounder thinkers than did the golden age of the literary efflorescence of Greece. The philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are still our textbooks. The art and architecture of Attica remain unchallenged. It is the glory of Greece to have laid the basis for the culture of the modern world.

But a brighter glory is that of ancient Israel. Taught by the prophets, men saw more clearly into the heart of reality there. It was seen that as wisdom is nobler than strength, so righteousness is nobler than wisdom. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee," cried one of Israel's prophets in the eighth century before Christ, "but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. 6:8). And with this agree the words of another prophet: "Thus saith the Lord; Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jer. 9:23, 24).

The Psalms are full of this sentiment. They record the exercises of the people who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. Read Psalms 15 and 24 for a proof of this.

Righteousness and not ritual qualifies for access to God and for a place of nearness on His holy hill. The holiness of the Divine Presence excludes the man who, whatever be the multitude of his sacrifices or the length and loudness of his prayers, comes with an unclean heart or with unclean hands. Hence the profound penitence of Psalms 51 and 32. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a contrite spirit. "Repentance *toward* God" is more than the discovery that sin brings trouble on the wrongdoer. It is the sense, divinely begotten, that Love and Light have been sinned against; that the heart of God has been wounded; that the will of God has been rejected, supplanted by one's own perverted will. And this conviction is learned only in the immediate presence of God; it is the fruit of the vision of His Face (Job 42: 5, 6).

The note of profound humiliation and self-judgment before God which runs through the Psalms, the *de profundis* cry, as the God-seeker descended into the abyss of evil in his own heart (Ps. 130: 1) shows that the righteousness Israel sought after had not been attained. (See Rom. 11: 7.) The lesson of the centuries of divine dealing was to bring home the fact that man is altogether incapable in himself to produce an acceptable righteousness to God. Is not this the controversy with Israel still? See Romans 10 where the apostle pours out his heart for Israel that they might be saved. Why? Because Israel is still going about to establish a self-made righteousness. The apostle credits them with zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They are ignorant of the only righteousness God can accept. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He is

Jehovah Tsidkenu, i.e., *the Lord our Righteousness* (Jer. 23:5, 6). All other righteousness is excluded as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). In Him the quest for righteousness finds its goal (Isa. 45:24).

The Psalmist caught a glimpse of this. After describing the ethical terms on which God can admit man to His holy hill, he says: "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Ps. 24:3-5). Righteousness, then, must be a gift; it can never be earned (See Rom. 5:17). It is the consciously bankrupt sinner who learns that he must *obtain* what he was not able to *attain*. The prodigal is garbed with the "*best robe*" in the father's house. A better robe than the innocency which clothed the still unfallen man. A more glorious dress than that worn by the cherubim and seraphim. They stand abashed before the throne of the thrice Holy One, veiling their faces. But Christ, raised again for our justification, seated in the glory, "far above all heavens," in a higher blessedness in the humanity in which He glorified the Father in the putting away of our sins, than angels ever had, is *our righteousness*. Well might the Apostle Paul exclaim: "That I might win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." For "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God has wrought in the condemnation of sin in the cross in the sacrifice of the sinless Christ, and the subsequent placing Him as our representative on the other side of death and

judgment, without our sins, in the highest glory, that we, being now “in him” might receive the Spirit, who sets us free from the law of sin and death, and fulfills in us the righteousness which the Law called for but never produced (Rom. 8:2-4).

XI

Israel's Quest for a Man

THE student of Old Testament prophecy is made aware that two lines of teaching run side by side, and that there is little appearance of bringing them into harmony with each other. The one was the hope of Jehovah's Day, His public vindication, the appearing of His glory, the triumph of His cause, the establishment of His will, and the universal spread of His kingdom. The prophets, and the Psalmists who stood with them, never doubted that Jehovah would have the last word in the long controversy with evil, and that His enemies would be reduced to impotence and silence (Isa. 2:10-22; 11:9; 40:3-10).

The other hope was that of the coming of a Man, in whom the heart of God and that of bitterly disappointed humanity could rest: the Man who would be all that a man should be for God, the kind of man He intended: the Man who should undo the consequences of the fall of the first man, who should be victorious over the tricks and schemes of the enemy of God and man, and finally restore Eden to a sorrow-stricken and death-shadowed earth (Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1-9; 32:2; 42:1-4, 6, 7).

Sometimes we read that Jehovah is coming (Ps. 96:13; 98:7-9). Sometimes that there is a *Man* coming who will be the answer to the ideal set forth at the beginning, the Man in the divine image and after His likeness, and who can be set over all the works of God's hands. How the prophets delight to delineate His features! How they love

to turn aside from the troubles of their times to feast upon His perfections! How they enjoy tracing His path through reproach, rejection, and suffering, to universal dominion! And all this we find reflected in the Psalms (See Ps. 8, 45, 72; 89:19-27).

The expectation of the coming Man doubtless goes back to the Protevangelium, which like a sphinx crouches at the very threshold of the volume of revelation. It is the Gospel imbedded in the pronouncement of judgment upon the serpent, the incarnation of the world of darkness, foretelling that the schemes of the prince of darkness would be upset by the superior Wisdom of God in the incarnation of One who would enter humanity by means of the very woman whom the serpent had beguiled. That, though the serpent would pierce His heel, He would crush his head, the seat of his evil plans and machinations. This promise was repeated after the second Fall of the race, on the other side of the Flood, to Abram, as the chosen vessel for the fulfillment of the primeval hope of a deliverer. That in Isaac his seed should be called, is very significant, as Isaac was born by an act of miracle, contrary to nature, in the dead womb of Sarah, and afterwards offered up as a burnt offering on the altar of absolute surrender to the will of God, and in figure raised up from thence. It was then that the promise was confirmed to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," words which the Spirit in the Apostle Paul interprets as referring to the Messiah. (See Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16.)

Thus did the descendants of Abraham know that they were to be the bringers in of the Man. Thus only can we

understand the mystic name of the *Shiloh*, uttered by Jacob on his deathbed in the spirit of prophecy, to come out of the tribe of Judah. Thus Balaam foresaw His appearance and sovereignty over the nations, while Moses rather dwelt on His character of Prophet, the Spokesman for God whose interpretation of God would be final, because complete, and whose Word heeded and obeyed, would determine the condition of membership with the true Israel of God (Gen. 49: 10; Num. 24: 17; Deut. 18: 15-19).

It was not till the days of David that the idea of the Kingdom of God mediated by the Messiah sprung out of his loins was grasped in faith. The Psalms are full of this Hope. See Psalms 2, 89, 132. The Man of the future is the idealization of the Davidic kingship. Do not both Jeremiah and Ezekiel call Him "David"? (Jer. 30: 9; Ezk. 24: 23.) Perhaps also Isaiah in chap. 55: 3, 4. In Psalm 2 He is the Son of God. In Psalm 45 He is the Royal Bridegroom in superhuman beauty, wedding a Gentile Bride. In Psalm 72 His righteous and universal reign of peace is celebrated. In Psalm 110 His heavenly Priesthood united with victorious Kingship at God's right hand is foreseen by David, who speaks of Him as *my Lord*.

The Psalmist saw in Him the Man in whom God finds His resource in view of the utter failure of all committed in responsibility into human hands. The prophets at the best only partially revealed the mind of God. As Hebrews tells us, God could not speak through them except *polumenos* and *polutropos*, that is, in a *fragmentary* and *composite* system of revelation (Heb. 1: 1). *The Son* alone could be the full Word of God. Priesthood had utterly failed in the hands

of the sons of Aaron. They burnt strange fire on the day after their consecration. The house of Eli drove the glory out of Israel. God had to forsake the very Tabernacle of Witness which Moses had dedicated (Lev. 10; 1 Sam. 1, 2, 3, 4; Psalm 78:60). And even without this sad tragedy of failure, "It was *not possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should *take away sins*." They were only "shadows of good things to come" by means of a higher and more perfect priesthood and by a costlier sacrifice (Heb. 9, 10). The kings of the dynasty of David could not prevent the calamity of the exile and the scattering of the nation. The hearts of the godly turned wistfully to the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King, the Anointed Man, the Man for God and the Man for humanity, the Second Man who could take up everything in which the first man had broken down, and carry out the original divine purpose in the creation of man. Hence the language of Psalm 80:14-19. Israel as the vineyard of the Lord's planting and the branch He had made strong for Himself, was burnt with fire, was cut down, had perished at the rebuke of His countenance. But faith looks away from the ruin to the right hand of God. There is no discouragement there. There sits in calm majesty the Man whom God has made strong for Himself. Everything is safe in His hands. He takes up in grace every divine concern, whether it be a fallen creation, a dying race, a scattered Israel, and we must now add, a defiled and divided church. Creation will yet be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The veil cast over all nations will yet be lifted, and they will enter into the reign of a King who will grant them a righteous government, when, long rejected, He will have his rights at

last. Israel will yet repent and be regenerated and regathered around the crucified Man, Jehovah's Fellow, who will then use them as His heralds to the ends of the earth. And as for the present testimony, the church, so favored and so guilty, more like a harlot than a chaste virgin espoused to one husband, He who loved her in eternity, and gave Himself for her on the cross, will yet present her to Himself a glorious church, not having a spot or a wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. No divine purpose can fail in Christ. For God has reached His rest in this Blessed Man. And He invites us to find rest in Him also.

It would appear that travailing Israel, the chosen mother, according to the flesh, of the Man of the Divine Counsels, mistook again and again the time of His arrival. It is feasible to believe that current events again and again tempted longing hearts to imagine that surely the promised Man must have been born. Thus the troubled eighth century B. C. might have been construed as the age of the Messiah. But Hezekiah, and afterwards Josiah, noble sons of Israel, were too small to wear the robes of the eagerly expected One. So again at the time of the return from Babylon. He must have been yearned for. The distress of the remnant of Israel called aloud for Him. But if anyone had fondly hoped Zerubbabel would fill the messianic rôle, they were sadly disappointed. The time was not yet. The last of the prophets had to point to Him as yet to come. No prophet like unto Moses had made his appearance as the voice of prophecy was about to utter its last oracle. Then four weary centuries of silence. Disillusionment settled upon the descendants of those who had so enthusiastically rebuilt the temple and

looked for its latter glory to exceed the former (Haggai 2:9). The messianic hope was interpreted by the nationalistic party in terms of a political and military Messiah. It was the old snare of wanting to have a king like the kings of the surrounding pagan nations. It was in principle the rejection of Jehovah's kingship (1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19), when in all secrecy and silence a new-born Babe was laid in a manger of a stable in little Bethlehem. All heaven was stirred at that sight, but earth knew not the import of that mighty event. Yet there were the poor and quiet in the land of Israel, they who formed the remnant of that day, speaking often one to another, meeting each other unofficially "in the hill country," away from the main lines of traffic (Luke 1:39, 65), and also in the courts of the Temple (2:21-38); they were in the secret which heaven had imparted to them. And when at last He came into manifestation, identifying Himself with broken and contrite penitents, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended as a dove upon Him, and the Father's voice declared: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." God had at last found His Man.

And soon weary and puzzled men discovered Him also. With Him they lived under opened heavens. They were as the sons of the bridechamber, feasting and merryhearted. They breathed the atmosphere of divine love and peace when with Him. The sight of His Face inspired them with faith. They could bring their sadness, their sickness, their sins to Him, and they knew He could save them and relieve them of their burdens. The seeking remnant of Israel had reached the end of their long quest. They had found the Man they were looking for.

Seated at God's right hand now, faith knows He is biding His time to straighten out every crooked thing, and break every chain, and heal every wound, and hush every storm, in this distracted world. For all things have been committed unto Him. But faith also knows that "earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot cure," not merely in the day yet to be born, but here and now. The Man for God is the Man for us also.

XII

The Messiah in the Psalms

AS THE Messianic Hope is the core of the Old Testament and the *raison d'être* of Israel as a chosen people, we would naturally look for some expression of this Hope in the Psalms, which are the speech of that people who were the custodians of that Hope. And, indeed, we shall not be disappointed.

The ancient Synagogue interpreted the Psalms messianically much more fully than even the Church is disposed to do. (See, for instance, Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* under "List of Old Testament passages messianically applied in Rabbinic writings" in appendix lx.) The Psalms bear witness to the fact that when man fell, he was not left altogether to his doom. On the evening of that fatal day, fallen man heard the gospel in the judgment pronounced on the serpent. The ultimate goal of humanity would be the Incarnation—the Seed of the woman; the ultimate goal of the Incarnation, the restoration of humanity. The history of Israel prepared for this goal, and in the Psalms we see how this Hope affected the heart of the godly in Israel.

The Messianic Hope passed through successive stages in history. It was first a national hope before it broke national boundaries to become the possession of all mankind. The most exclusive and narrow people were taught to become universalistic in their outlook. God concentrated on Abram that He might bless all the nations of the earth through his Messianic Seed. Both narrowness and universality had their

place in the divine economy. Delitzsch in his commentary on the Psalms, speaks of five kinds of Messianic Psalms.

(1) Those Psalms that definitely point to the end-time when Israel would be redeemed through a scion of the house of David.

(2) Those Psalms in which the life of David prefigured a greater than himself.

(3) Those Psalms in which David idealizes his experiences prophetically. The Spirit of Christ spoke in him.

(4) Psalms in which it would appear as if certain hopes were centered on a contemporary king, which could only disappoint, as they could only be fulfilled in a superhuman Messiah. (See, for example, Psalms 45 and 72.)

(5) Psalms in which Jehovah's coming and intervention are celebrated, ushering a new divine order on earth, the crown and climax of history. That the coming of the Davidic King of the end-time and the "*Parousia*" of *Jehovah* to reign, are one and the same event, we know now in the light of the truth of the Incarnation. But in the Psalms, as in the other Scriptures of the Old Testament, these two expectations run side by side without any attempt to bring them into harmony.

1. The Person of the Messiah is set forth in the Psalms as the ideal Man, who is everything a man should be for God (See Psalm 1). The heart of Israel called loudly for a Man. Each generation was in travail to bring him forth, this travail being intensified by the deepening sense of penitence which the exercised remnant was made to feel under the chastening hand of God. (See Psalm 80:14-19.)

2. The Messiah is clearly understood as a superhumanly-endowed Man, a Man far above the rank of ordinary humanity. (See Psalm 8.)

3. Many Psalms speak of the pathway of the ideal Man as one beset by enemies and by death, over which He finally triumphs. (See Psalms 16, 40, 69, 91, 109.)

4. His priestly and, therefore, atoning sufferings touch the profoundest depths. We read of the Righteous One whose sufferings bring blessing to humanity. Thus does the age-long struggle between the two seeds, that of the Woman and that of the Serpent, reach its climax in the Messiah. Psalm 22 is a clear exposition of this aspect of the Messianic Hope.

For further study we might read Psalm 2, for the certainty of His ultimate triumph; Psalm 72, for the peace of His kingdom; Psalm 45, in which His reign is compared to a marriage; Psalm 110, in which we see the Messiah biding His time at the right hand of God, until He is publicly installed as the Eternal Priest and King of humanity.

Altogether, I think we might say that we have a fourfold view of the Messiah in the Book of Psalms. He is *prophetically* foretold in those Psalms in which the psalmist echoes back to God the divine speech concerning Him in the prophetic Scriptures.

Then he is *typically* foreshadowed in those Psalms in which the sufferings of the godly Man (Hebrew, "*Chassid*") are dwelt upon. He is *spiritually* longed for in those Psalms in which the deeper aspirations of the soul are voiced. The cry for righteousness, for the vision of God, for the light of His countenance, are desires which the Christ came to fulfill. He

is *mystically* experienced, for He was already by His Spirit in the hearts of His ancient people to whom glimpses of His sufferings and glory were vouchsafed (1 Pet. 1:11). They drank of a "spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). It was thus that "Abraham rejoiced to see" His "day and was glad" (Jno. 8:56). As all divine *manifestations* from the beginning were in and by the Son (Jno. 1:18), so all spiritual *experiences* were foretastes of those heavenly benefits, which are poured out on us in His Incarnation and redeeming grace, now that "the fulness of the time" has come.

XIII

The Inner Life of the Ideal Man

ONE of the chief attractions of the Psalms, to a heart that loves Christ, is the discovery of glimpses of His inner life when He was here on earth. The Gospels give us some of the outer circumstances through which He passed in the steps of that blessed life—not a complete account; it is impossible to construct a “*life of Jesus*” from what is recorded. The four Evangelists give us in fact only fragments of His earth-life; what they offer us is a *Gospel*, i.e., Glad Tidings from God, and these in terms of a Personality; or, as the Apostle Paul puts it: “The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

But concerning the *inner* life of this Blessed One, the Gospels are still more reticent. Only a few hints, such as the adoration of the Father in Matthew 11, and the prayer and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane are vouchsafed. These tell us something of what passed through His sinless soul in communion with the Father. But in the Psalms the Spirit of Christ in the heart of the godly remnant of ancient Israel tells out richly of the profoundest exercises of Him who glorified the life of faith, beginning it on His mother’s breast and finishing it on the cross (Psalm 22). The Psalms may indeed be called *the Diary of the Inner Life of the Man Christ Jesus*.

Take Psalm 16 as a sample. It sets forth the ideal life lived by the Messiah as an answer to the challenge thrown out in Psalm 15. Just as we hear the challenge in Revelation 5, “Who is worthy?” The answer there is: “the Lamb as it

had been slain." The fifteenth Psalm calls for a man who cannot be moved, because his hands and heart are pure in the light of God's holy place. The sixteenth Psalm in reply presents the man who lives his life joyously, calmly, and unmoved, even though that life is threatened by death. It bears witness that neither poverty, rejection, loneliness, homelessness, or death could move Him out of the path of dependence, or cause a feeling of discouragement or murmuring to arise in His heart.

The sixteenth Psalm is the language of a man who has found his treasure in God. Compare verses 5, 6, with Numbers 18:20. Our blessed Lord was the true *Israelite* in the wilderness of temptation; the true *Levite* in the days of His ministry; and He is the true *Priest* in His present life in the heavenly sanctuary. As a Levite, He had no earthly possessions. But unlike Asaph, a singing Levite, in Psalm 73, whose inner life was thrown into confusion because he had gotten out of tune with God, and then envied the prosperity of the godless, the man of Psalm 16 sets Jehovah *always* before his face, and finds in the smile of that Face more than earthly treasure. Psalm 16 is a poor man counting his blessings. He has God for his own possession. It is a holy and glad poverty, for this poor and dependent man is under divine control. He finds delight in the fellowship of the saints that are on the earth. He is the object of the divine care and solicitude. He is divinely taught even in the night seasons of sorrow and bereavement. He has learned the secret of the practice of the Presence of God. Thus he has indeed a good heritage. This poor man, who has only a "cup" as he pursues his pilgrim way, buries himself in the deeps of the

delights found in God as a bee seeking honey in the flower. Well can he leave both soul and body with God in hope of resurrection when face to face with death. The present blessedness guarantees future glory. It is indeed "eternal life" to have the living God for our own.

Now we do not possess a person as we possess things. A blind man may own the finest pictures, but they are useless to him. An idiot may be the owner, as far as title goes, to the most complete library, but he cannot use it. We possess God in the measure in which we are in sympathetic relations with Him. When we understand Him; when we find delight in His society; when we love His will; when we joyfully accept His daily appointments; then alone do we possess Him. For then He truly possesses us. Thus does a disciple make his master his own. Thus does a friend secure the friendship of another. Thus does the relationship between bride and bridegroom come to be established. It is a reciprocal experience. God is the inheritance of His people when His people have become His inheritance. You cannot have God without self-renunciation. There cannot be two master passions in the same heart. The rising sun and the stars cannot shine together in the same sky.

Psalm 16 is the Old Testament forecast of the *Kenosis* of Philippians 2. Only neither here nor there is it stated in terms of theology, but rather as the keynote of the inner life; of the Word who had become flesh; of the One originally in the very form of God, emptying Himself to take a bondman's form, and in that form of subjection to the will of Another, giving up His human rights as well, humbling Himself to become obedient, even to the death of the cross.

But out of that cross of voluntary self-emptying and humiliation comes not only the undoing of the mischief brought in by the Fall of the first man, who snatched at the prize to be equal with God—thus to become independent of Him, but also the birth of a people in whom the traits of the Second Man are in some degree reproduced, and who are disciplined and trained to live the selfsame life of faith, looking ever to Him, the Author and the Completer of that life, who has reached the “pleasures for evermore” in God’s right hand, till they join Him in that place where the overcomer’s crown is placed on their brow also; “more than conquerors through Him that loved” them.

XIV

The Psalm of the Cross

I.

THE twenty-second Psalm occupies the same position in the Book of Psalms that the fifty-third of Isaiah does in the prophetic literature of Israel. It is an inspired photograph of the saddest hours which the soul of our blessed Lord passed through on earth. In the glory He still remembers them. For it is clearly the language of the Spirit of Christ in the prophet Jeremiah, according to Lamentations 3:1, 19, 20: "I am the Man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. . . Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance."

Both the sufferings and the glories are found in this Psalm. It begins with a shriek of unutterable anguish; it goes on to a cry for divine help; it blossoms out into the language of implicit faith and trust, even in the deepest darkness; it ends with thanksgiving; it tells of the wonderful vision which our Lord had, even the joy set before Him, by which He endured the cross and despised the shame. He believes that His sacrifice will provide the peace offering to high and low, on which they will feast and by which they will worship. He declares that when the story of His sufferings is proclaimed, it will be a gospel message to generations yet unborn.

The words of our Lord: "I, if I am lifted up from the

earth," (that is on the cross) "will draw all men unto Me," are an epitome of this Psalm. For the comment of the Holy Spirit on those words is that they signified the manner of His death.

How deep is the piety of this Psalm! It is the spirit of the silent Lamb, who looked not at second causes, but beyond them to the Father, meekly drinking the bitter cup given to Him, not by Judas, or Herod, or the priests, or Pilate, but by the Father. Forsaken of God—for though He knew not sin, He was made to feel all that sin is and sin deserves at the hands of a Holy and sin-hating God—He justifies Him in the expression of His holy judgment as a true worshiper. And that was His greatest victory, His most marvelous achievement, the decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem, which has shaken the kingdom of darkness to its foundation.

In the meantime all is dark! No help seems to come to Him from on high! He is left unheard, even though He had lived a life of faith and trust from His very birth! He mentions His blessed mother. No earthly father is referred to, though as an Israelite He can speak of the "fathers" of old as His godly ancestry, according to the flesh. Their faith-life was sometimes interrupted, as in the case of Abraham, the father of them that believe. But *He* carried out the principle of faith from the cradle to the cross, without one momentary lapse.

II.

Analyzing this solemn Psalm, we find His sufferings under five heads. Verses 1 to 6: what He suffered at the

hands of God, the cup of wrath our sins helped to fill, the very thought of which, in the garden, brought His sinless soul into such mysterious agony. Verses 7 and 8: His mental sufferings, caused by man. Verses 12 and 13: the sufferings caused by demons. Verses 14 to 18: the physical pains of crucifixion. Verses 19 to 21: the actual power of death, under the figures of "the sword," "the dog," "the lion," "the unicorn."

The ancient synagogue took the title: "The Hind of the Morning" as a name for the Shekinah, and as a symbol of dawning redemption. It saw the suffering Messiah in this Psalm. (See *Jalkut Shimoni* to Isaiah, par. 359).

Alone in death He obtains a universal empire. His first objective in death was to make it possible for Jehovah to dwell in the midst of a redeemed Israel, constituted a praising people (comp. verse 3 with Lev. 16:16). Then we find Messiah surrounded by the assembly of the wicked, His own not receiving Him (verses 12 to 16). Then we hear Him singing praises to the Father in the midst of the church made up of those whom He calls His brethren (verse 22). They are often a small congregation, two or three. However He looks forward to lead the praises of "the great congregation," the millennial Israel (verse 25). But He will yet see of the travail of His soul to the full, even all the ends of the earth becoming Jehovah's worshipers (verses 27, 28).

There are thirty-three prophecies in this Psalm, all fulfilled in the cross. It is indeed the tragedy of history that Israel is still blind to its message. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is omitted in the Sabbath readings in the Synagogue.

So this Psalm is also avoided. Professor Claude Montefiore's commentary on the Psalms deals with Psalms 21 and 23, but omits any reference to Psalm 22. It is to Jewish unbelief "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence."

III.

"The meek shall eat and be satisfied" (verse 26). The 22nd Psalm is the Psalm of the Sufferings of the Messiah on the cross, as we have seen. He is the Sin offering and the Peace offering. He had a wonderful vision on the Cross of the results of His passion. In ever widening circles, until the uttermost are reached, His experiences will be the nourishment and gladness of many. Many will obtain eternal life, become satisfied and worship, as they feed on the Sacrifice. There is but One whose language is heard in this ancient Psalm. It is the language of the Messiah throughout. David is not in it.

1. *The world's sacrificial feast.* Christ's sacrifice has two aspects. It is presented to God and it is appropriated by man. We have peace because God has accepted it. We have life and food because we feed on it. The death of Christ alone can still the hunger of humanity.

But who feed on the death of the Messiah thus? "The meek." Those who have been through the crushing. The penitent and the poor. Those who have been between the upper and the nether millstones of the justice and the mercy of God.

2. *The satisfaction of the feast.* "Satisfied." Who in the world is satisfied? The cross meets our need completely. It sets us right with God with respect to our sins. Its value

maintains us in the holy light of His eternal throne. It abolishes death. It conquers the devil. It has rent the veil. Who but a believer in Christ is satisfied?

The cross is the solution of every problem. It reveals the heart of God. It shows the love for which we are ever seekers, consciously or unconsciously. It interprets thus the quest of the human soul. It pacifies the conscience. It cleanses the conscience. It furnishes a new motive for holy living. It is the door of escape from the old nature. It is the door into all divine blessedness.

3. *The guest of God.* "The Meek"—those who have been fat upon the earth (see next verse). They are bowed down now. Self-sufficiency keeps men away from this feast. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness are filled. And the end is that they become worshipers. And the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

(NOTE: I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Alexander Maclaren's *Expositions on the Psalms* for some of the thoughts expressed under this third head.)

XV

The Spiritual Interpretation of History

THERE is no Psalm more frequently quoted in the New Testament than Psalm 110. Our Lord used it in His dispute with the deniers of the super-human nature of the Messiah, according to Mat. 22:42-43. It follows in due order Psalm 109 where the Messiah is presented as "poor and needy." Here He is seen as exalted Lord. The wonderful epistle to the Hebrews is written with the first verse of this Psalm as its background. Four times in that epistle the opened heavens show us the once humbled Christ at the right hand of God in heaven. (1) As the *Son*, greater than the prophets, in whom God has given the final and complete revelation (Chap. 1:1-5). (2) As the *High-Priest* who enables us to draw near to God (Chap. 8:1, 2). (3) As the *One who has completed His sacrificial service*, having by His one offering perfected for ever His sanctified, i. e., priestly, people, so that He can sit in perpetuity, as far as His cross-work is concerned, at the right hand of God (Chap. 10:1-12). (4) As the *One who has perfectly lived out a life of faith*, to be the example and inspiration of a like faith in His people, *set* down in His humanity, as He *sat* down in His deity in chap. 1, at the right hand of the majesty on high, according to chap. 11:1-3.

The 110th Psalm gives us the key to history. The One who alone can right the wrongs of earth, hush its storms, break its chains, heal its wounds, straighten out its crookedness, dispel its darkness, is hidden in heaven, because there

was no room for Him on earth. Sitting at the right hand of God, the exclusive privilege of the Son and Heir, He is patiently biding His time, till the hour when God will publicly intervene on His behalf on earth, making His enemies the footstool of His feet.

Rejected in His lowly appearing in the days of His flesh, He is seen in a higher glory. David had a sight of Him and calls Him "*my Lord*." Elizabeth afterwards called the yet unborn babe in the womb of the Virgin, "*my Lord*" (Luke 1:43). The redeemed Magdalene thought of Him, whom she still imagined as dead, as "*my Lord*" (John 20:13). Thomas adored Him, face to face with the evidences of His resurrection, saying: "*My Lord and my God*"! (John 20:28). While the apostle Paul, looking up to Him in the glory, the One who had spoken to him out of the uncreated light, brighter than the noon day sun, which blinded him to earthly glory, said: "*Christ Jesus my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" (Phil. 3:8).

And that was the vision granted to the human ancestor of the Messiah, King David.

This Psalm is the counterpart to Psalm 2. The *Septuagint* translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in pre-Christian times, renders the third verse thus: "With Thee is dominion in the day of Thy power, in the splendors of Thy saints; I have begotten Thee from the womb before the morning." So does this Psalm witness to the super-human glory of the Christ.

However, in spite of His rejection on earth, His kingdom is safe. Hence He *sits* in undisturbed repose. His cause

is no wise in jeopardy. Believers are translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. For while the day of public display has not yet come, He and they waiting for this, *the Holy Ghost has come*. And as the epistle to the Romans shows, where the present reign of grace is opened up, the kingdom of God is "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Thus the kingdom is a present reality, and not to be thought of as future only. The kingdom is the sphere where He is owned in spite of His rejection.

And as there is a spiritual kingdom, there is a spiritual Zion also, the metropolis of that kingdom. True believers have come to this Zion (Hebrews 12:22). They rejoice in the exaltation of the Lamb on His heavenly throne from whence, as "Prince and Savior," He administers the wealth of grace to bankrupt, ruined man. Jehovah is now sending forth the rod of Messiah's strength out of this Zion (verse 2). Pentecost was the first installment of this. And is not the Word of the Cross *the power of God* (1 Cor. 1:18)? It is *the rod of His mouth* and the *breath of His lips* (Isaiah 11:4). For a spiritual kingdom can only grow by spiritual means.

And what Pentecost inaugurated is still being continued. Verse 3 shows us in the present election out of Israel and the Gentiles called out of the nations, the "firstfruits" of the coming harvest (James 1:18). They are an army of volunteers, priest-warriors, the weapons of whose warfare are not carnal, beautiful as the dew, constantly being rejuvenated, like the fresh dew every morning, each dew drop reflecting the sun in miniature. For there has been a con-

stant succession of fresh recruits since the day of Pentecost until our day.

After telling us that Christ is God's final word in verse 4, and that though at God's right hand, He is with us as our Leader from victory to victory on earth, in verses 5 and 6 (comp. Mat. 28:16-20 and Mark 16:19, 20), this wonderful Psalm closes with the reminder that our Lord has reached His exaltation, secret now, public in the age to come, by the pathway of humiliation (verse 7). Never, never, will that story, enshrined in the Gospels, be forgotten. We shall know Him, we shall know Him, by the print of the nails in His hands.

XVI

The Twenty-third Psalm

I.

THE title to the twenty-third Psalm tells us that David was the penman through whom this gem of sacred poetry became a part of the book of Psalms. The Psalm titles are not considered to have been part of the original text, though they are very ancient. Most likely "the men of Hezekiah," who copied out the literary records, placed them there (Prov. 25:1). We know that the *Septuagint* translators found them already affixed to the Psalms some two or more centuries before the Christian era. So, whatever critics may say about it, I accept Psalm 23 as a genuine Davidic composition, taking the title on its face value.

But the question may be raised, "When did David write this lovely lyric?" It certainly reflects the halcyon days when he as a youth kept his father's sheep on the plains of Bethlehem. But did he also write the Psalm then? Of course, he might have done so, for even in those early days he was noted for his skill on the harp, and it is reasonable to suppose that he accompanied his playing by the words which welled up in his heart. Nevertheless I suggest that the Psalm must have been written by one who was of mature experience; one who had made the twofold discovery of his own evil heart, and of the grace in the heart of God that could cope with it. This discovery is not made in a day. It takes time to find oneself out, and to arrive at the conclusion which is the background of this Psalm: "I know myself to be a stupid,

wandering sheep. I need a wise and strong and patient shepherd to keep his eye on me continually, or there is no knowing what mischief I might not get into." A young believer might say with the apostle: "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." But the tried and tested saint of years alone can testify that *he knows it*.

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it;
Seal it for Thy courts above."

We admire the enthusiasm and daring of the young. But how much of this may be mixed with self-confidence; a girding oneself to go whither one would, as young Simon Bar-jona did. Beautiful it is to see the chastened, subdued pilgrim of long years, leaning on the everlasting arms, having no confidence in the flesh, and yet retaining the fire and fervor of his youth. And it is this that we find in the twenty-third Psalm.

In coming to this Psalm, as in our approach to any part of holy Scripture, we must come as learners, as seekers, enquiring in the sanctuary for the disclosure of divine secrets. Scripture, like the works of God in the outward creation, is full of hidden wonders, which are only revealed to those who come to Scripture in a becoming spirit. The rustic going to his daily toil, surrounded by the glories of nature, may be oblivious to them.

"A primrose by the river's brim,
A yellow primrose is to him,
And nothing more."

While to another, in tune with the heart of the eternal Goodness, and keen-eyed to the beauty of the eternal Wisdom, of which creation is the mirror, for "the whole earth is full of his glory," may see in the meanest flower that grows, things too deep for tears.

Let us get into the habit of asking Scripture questions. The more questions, the more answers. The very silences of Scripture have an eloquent voice (see John 14:2). There are questions about God, His attributes, purposes, ways; His progressive unfolding of His glorious Name, His Incarnation in the Son. Questions about the Divine-Human Christ, His nature, His work of redemption; His offices, titles, glories, perfections; His eternal relationship to the Godhead; His voluntary relationship to humanity as the Second Man, the Mediator between God and man. Questions about the blessed Spirit, His operations in human experience, His place in the economy of grace. Questions about the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God, their proper place in the divine plan of the ages. Questions about the last things: death, judgment, eternity. These are but a few samples of the questions which Scripture will answer if we will wait in silence at the gate of divine Wisdom (Prov. 8:34). Sure I am, as a beloved servant of Christ said: "No careless reader of Scripture ever made a close walker with God." What is the use of boasting of the Bible as being "the best seller," when the fact remains that there is no book more superficially read, and more slovenly pronounced in our public gatherings? If people would only give the Bible a chance, it would prove its virility, up-to-

dateness, dynamic power, thrilling interest, and perennial freshness, from age to age.

The first question I would put to the twenty-third Psalm is: "What does it teach us about God?"

Now the first and the last verses contain the Name by which it pleased God to make Himself known to His Old Testament people, given in our English translation as *Lord*, but in the Hebrew as *Jehovah*. This is God's personal Name, which is found also in the Name *Jesus*, which means *Jehovah-Saviour*. So that we have in this Name that which transcends all dispensations. It is the Name our Saviour bears on the throne of the universe in His glorified humanity, "the Name which is above every name." And there is a day appointed when every knee in the universe will bow to that Name.

Now, how is Jehovah presented in this Psalm? He is spoken of in terms of personality, as the shepherd of souls, as sustaining the most intimate and endearing relationship imaginable with His people. Jehovah is to me all that a shepherd is to his sheep. He is not a philosophical abstraction; a matter for metaphysical speculation; a problem to be solved when we reach the end of the argument. God is a personal God. He is, as the Old Testament loves to put it, a "Living God."

Our age needs a revival of this fact in human consciousness. Nearly every modern cult is rooted in pantheism. God is declared to be "Principle." You cannot pray to a principle! You might as well pray to the law of gravitation or to the principle of chemical affinities. The heart cries out for communion with the living God. A personal experience

of a personal God alone can meet the cravings of an awakened soul.

And then this heart-warming thought that this wonderfully personal God will be my shepherd! The psalmist knew no other shepherd except one who identified himself with his sheep. The eastern shepherd has no life apart from the flock. He remains with the sheep day and night, summer and winter. The result is that shepherd and sheep become wonderfully intimate. The shepherd knows each individual sheep, and each sheep knows him. He calls his sheep by their particular name, and the sheep know it when they hear it. Thus the true knowledge of God is ever acquired. It is the fruit of sustained communion with God. Books and meetings by themselves cannot give it. It is a progressive and ever deepening discovery of the blessedness in God; the deep in man calling upon the deep in God. The need in man drawing upon the fulness of supply in God. Thus we become sure of Him amid the uncertainties and ever-changing circumstances of this earth-life.

Again, if Jehovah is our Shepherd, then the Old Testament, as well as the New, proclaims that God is Love. Just as Love is the summing up of the Law, according to the Apostle Paul, so is Love the summing up of all that is revealed of God in the Old Testament. The Incarnation finally brought into visibility all that the Scriptures given before had declared to be true of the divine character.

XVII

The Twenty-third Psalm

II.

NEXT to the question, "What is God?" comes in importance another question, one which naturally grows out of it: "What about man?" For man is made in the divine image; and as we can reason only from the known to the unknown, we can get some idea of God from our understanding of man, for God meant man to be a mirror of Himself. Now has this psalm an answer to this great inquiry?

It certainly shows us that it matters to God what kind of a man I am. Psalm 23 celebrates the worth of the individual man. It is in every part the language of an individual. The flock, as such, does not come into view, but the isolated individual sheep. I, as a lonely, weak, tempted, often perplexed man, may say: "The Lord is *my* shepherd. . . . He maketh *me* to lie down in green pastures. . . . *Thou* art with *me* . . . *Thou* preparest a table before *me* . . ."

What a discovery! God notices the individual; has a place and a path for the individual, be he ever so lowly or obscure. Every man has worth and value to God and is necessary to His great scheme of things. And if God thus concentrates on the individual, every individual has a personal interest in the whole of God. "A whole sun for me!" cried with rapture the Highland crofter's widow, in her bitter poverty as she watched the glory of the sunrise. So the finite human personality has all the wealth of God's infinite Personality for his enjoyment.

This simple, yet profound, truth needs reëmphasizing in our day, even as our Lord reëmphasizes it in His public ministry, particularly in His parables and allegories. (See Luke 15 and John 10.) The tendency in some countries is toward standardization and regimentation in public life, so that all God-given personality and individuality are in danger of being submerged there. This would mean, if it becomes paramount, a relapse into paganism where the individual was only *a means* and not *an end*. He belonged to his clan, his tribe, his ilk, and to the self-deified state, in the last analysis. He had to adjust his life to this. Outside of it, he was homeless and without protection. But from the Holy Scriptures we learn the story of the Divine Self-Revelation to individual men, so that no one can complain that he is overlooked or passed by or neglected, but can look up out of the deepest pit of loneliness, and cry: "O God, Thou art *my God*."

The message of the psalm under consideration is that it is possible for the individual man, whatever the state of the world, or the community, or the nation, or the flock (i. e., the church in her fellowship character), to come into personal and direct relations with the living God. I do not know any truth more essential for the critical times in which our lot is cast. Whatever our personal understanding of prophecy may be, it must be clear to every thoughtful observer, to every one not altogether blind to the signs of the times, that the faith and patience of the souls of Christian men will be severely tested in the not distant future. Then it will be made evident that only that faith, which is rooted in a personal discovery of the reality of God, can hold out.

A mere tradition, however orthodox; a second-hand creed, however correct, one accepted on authority from others; a conversion which is "of the will of man" only, and lacking the evidence of one having been "born of God," will be unequal to the strain. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," said our Lord. The question is: "Have I had my own soul history with God?" "Has He made Himself known to me, by many infallible proofs, producing that conviction which the sophistries of men or the assaults of demons cannot shake and which will not fail in the hour of the fiercest trial?"

To this the church is brought in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation. Seven times *the individual overcomer* emerges, whatever be the state of the corporate profession of which he forms a part. And that individual *overcoming* is intimately connected with an individual *hearing*, amid the babel of other voices, what *the Spirit* is saying to the churches at any particular time.

But note the difference. In the first three churches, the call to listen to the Spirit's voice precedes the word of encouragement to the overcomer. In the last four churches, which, as I read the passages, speak of four types of church life going on, side by side in Christendom, until the end of the present period, the overcomer alone will be able to hear the Spirit's message to his times! The order is thus reversed. But either way, individual responsibility, individual dealings with God, individual experience of His indwelling power, are the great things emphasized at the close of the church's day of testimony.

XVIII

The Twenty-third Psalm

III.

WE HAVE seen how the psalm under consideration speaks of the experience of an individual. Now what did the author find that he considers sufficiently important to pass on as a testimony to generations yet unborn?

The answer of the psalm is, he found the riches of eternity while still living his external life amid the vanities of time.

One objective of the Holy Scriptures is to unveil to us the spiritual and eternal world. They teach us, who believe their inspired witness, to look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. This is precisely what we find in this psalm.

Its terminology is that of material things, but the content of the verbal thought-forms refers to that which belongs to the realm of the spiritual. This is in harmony with the principle laid down by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:20, that visible things are the index of the invisible. The world of spiritual substance reveals itself through the medium of the world of matter, which is but a shadow of the substance, a window through which we may look into the wonders of the unseen. The visible world is the sacrament of the invisible God.

The green pastures and still waters of Psalm 23 are found in the heavenly spheres, now entered into and enjoyed by those whose powers of spiritual apprehension have been

divinely quickened out of that fatal state of coma into which sin and unbelief plunge the soul.

The fact is that every human being lives in two worlds at one and the same time. By means of his physical endowments, he lives in a material world, the world known to the five senses. But because there also pulsates in his lowly dust-tabernacle the breath of eternity, he is "a living soul" and breathes the atmosphere of the spiritual world from which that breath has come.

Now, that unseen world in which we live and move and have our spiritual being, an environment impossible to escape, may be a world of light, love, harmony, peace. But it may also be a world of darkness, corruption, uncleanness, discord. We are in equipoise between two worlds, as it were, and it is we who shall decide which of them shall dominate us. Tersteegen, the evangelical mystic of the eighteenth century, declares that two worlds are bidding for our souls: heaven and hell. Hell, he says, *cannot* enter without our consent. And heaven, he says, *will* not. With either the one or the other, each human being on earth is in vital touch inwardly. But in this present life there may be the greatest contrast between a man's outward and his unseen environments. It is possible to live outwardly in a palace and inwardly in a pigsty. On the other hand, one may be in circumstances of pinching poverty outwardly, and yet be enjoying the riches of the celestial spheres. Paul and Silas were in very trying circumstances in the inner prison in Philippi. But their spirits were in heavenly places. Madame Guyon, for many years in solitary confinement in the Bastille, would speak of the secrets of that world of blessedness,

where the Lamb is the Light and Glory. Her words have been translated by the poet Cowper :

“My heart is easy and my burden light;
I smile, though sad, when God is in my sight.
The more my woes in secret I deplore,
I taste Thy goodness, and I love Thee more.
Here, while a solemn stillness reigns around,
Faith, hope, and love within my soul abound;
And while my friends suppose me plunged in care,
The joy of angels, unperceived, I share.”

Or, to quote the words of another persecuted saint, driven away into exile, and debarred from preaching Christ, Samuel Rutherford:

“Oft in my sea-girt prison,
My Lord and I had tryst,
For Anworth is not heaven
And preaching is not Christ.”

So in Psalm 23, the psalmist passes indeed through the valley of the shadow of death; enemies are seeking to destroy his life; but he can lie down as one satisfied in pastures of eternal life; he can drink of those crystal streams of refreshment that find their rise in the celestial throne; he sits at a prepared table before an overflowing cup; and the anointing upon his head enables him to lift himself up in holy dignity and conscious security.

Now the difference between this life and the life beyond these earth-shadows is, that there the outward and the inward will be in perfect correspondence. Every one will wake up in “his own place.” The children of light will be eternally

separated from the circumstances caused by "the unfruitful works of darkness," not merely inwardly as now, but outwardly, too. They will form their own congregation. The operation of the law of affinity will gather together around the Lord in sweet harmony those who derive their life from Him, and their external state will be the expression of the work wrought in their secret lives. Heaven within their souls will be reflected in the heavenly environment in which they will spend their eternity.

XIX

The Twenty-third Psalm

IV.

WE HAVE seen how the unseen world is unveiled in this psalm, and how rich the discoveries the soul can make in that sphere of blessedness which is so near, provided we do not close our spiritual eyes and ears, and thus become oblivious to its presence. But the question naturally arises now, "How did the Psalmist make this discovery and find this wealth of spiritual good?" The answer is *By faith*.

Psalm Twenty-three is the language of faith in every one of its separate passages. But when we speak of faith, we must remember that faith has its history, its stages of development. May I suggest the steps of faith from its germinal beginnings to its glorious finale?

Faith, I apprehend, begins with *appreciation*. God so presents the precious things which He wants us to have, that we begin to appreciate the spiritual above the material, the unseen above the visible, the heavenly above the things of earth.

Appreciation, sooner or later, produces *aspiration*. We become seekers for God's treasures. The soul is conscious of a divinely produced yearning for the things of eternal worth.

Aspiration must then become *appropriation*. And appropriation entitles the believer to make a joyful *affirmation*. Our Lord set forth the philosophy of prayer thus: "What

things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (See Mark 11:24.)

As given causes produce certain effects in the natural world, so assuredly will the laws of the spiritual world operate in the faith of affirmation, being sealed with confirmation. Of course, I assume that we have dealt with God about such things as are "according to his will." We cannot expect God to confirm self-generated prayers. He must say "No" to them, be they ever so importunate.

Having found in experience the confirmation of our God-prompted affirmation, what remains? *Application* and *Adoration*. Thus doth faith start, progress and reach its culmination.

Now in this psalm we have faith's rest, its jubilant affirmations, and the soul's testimony also to the confirmation, the seal of heaven upon the confession of faith.

"*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want,*" is not a mere subject of desire; it is an affirmation of a glorious fact. The man who can make it can add, "My fortune is made." There is no depression in his heart. He has found *Autarkeia*, Paul's great word in Second Corinthians 9:8: i. e., "all sufficiency." The heart no longer clamors for the things which lie outside the circle of the will of God. It is "content."

"*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: . . . thou art with me . . . Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. . . .*" The whole psalm is nothing but an unbroken chain of affirmations. There is not a single supplication in it. True prayer, prayer divinely begotten in the suppliant heart, sooner or later melts into the

affirmation that it has been heard, that the answer is sure, that one has not been speaking into the empty air, but into the open ear of the living God.

We need a revival of this experience in our prayer life, a rediscovery of the power wrapped up in the rest of faith. The *quest* of faith is but the bud of which the *rest* of faith is the flower and fruit.

How many, for instance, imagine that God's order is *Conflict, Victory, Rest*. Nay, the order of His revelation in the Gospel of His grace is *Faith, Rest, Victory*. Not rest because of victory, but victory because of rest. And that rest is found not by struggle and conflict, but by faith; that is, by simply believing what God says. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted (reckoned) unto him for righteousness." Literally, the word believed—and it is the first mention of its use in Scripture—is to say *Amen*. To Amen the divine Word to the soul is the noblest thing a creature can perform. Yet must the creature be reduced to utter impotency and emptiness before it is prepared to cease from its own contrivances, and by its Amen make room for the power of God?

XX

The Twenty-third Psalm

V.

WE HAVE spoken of the blessedness which is entered into by faith in the Twenty-third Psalm. The question still remains: "*When* may faith enter into this realm of divine good?" The answer of the Psalm is: "Right now." The entire Psalm is a present tense experience. It is not the record of past favors but the witness of what faith finds in God *today*.

Do we not need such a testimony? If God is a *living* God, then He is more than a *recorded* God, though the inspired record of His wonders in the long ago is a great encouragement to His trusting ones in days of rebuke and blasphemy like the present. But we need to have a fresh vision, our own discovery and evidence of His reality. "It is not enough," said George Fox, the glowing Quaker, "to be able to quote correctly what the prophets and psalmists and apostles said. What canst *thou* say?" The secret of true ministry is that it is the flowing of a divine stream from the fountain in the heart of the minister, with the objective that those who drink of the living water might have the self-same spring of life in themselves. Instead of that we find that so many never get beyond the drink they obtain out of the cups the minister hands to them. Abraham gave Hagar a bottle as she started out on her journey. The water in her bottle was soon spent. But then the Lord

opened her eyes and she saw to her amazement that she was sitting beside a springing well!

We need a present day proof of the power of God *in* us and *with* us. Every true Christian has had a golden yesterday, when he obtained his first vision of his Savior-Lord. He also looks forward to a golden tomorrow, when the last long mile of his earthly pilgrimage will have been covered, and he will be ushered into the House of the Lord, there to dwell with the Lover of his soul, and with the redeemed of all ages, for ever. But what about the today between? Psalm twenty-three tells us that we may have a golden today as well as a memory of a golden yesterday, and the glowing hope of a golden tomorrow.

Faith can say: "He *leadeth* me . . . He *maketh* me to lie down . . . He *restoreth* my soul . . . Thou *art* with me . . . Thou *preparest* a table before me in the presence of my enemies . . . Yea, my cup *runneth* over." All in the present tense.

And this is the uniform testimony of Scripture. The epistle to the Hebrews reminds its readers how God spake in times past through prophets and in His Son come in the flesh. But it also says: "See that ye refuse not Him that *speaketh* from heaven." And "as the Holy Ghost saith: Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." God is still speaking, but the heart must be kept tender and sensitive to the approach of the divine approach, lest the ear that can discern the Voice of heaven among the clanging noises of earth become dull.

XXI

The Imprecatory Psalms

I. The deep delight which every converted man feels in the reading of the Psalms frequently gets a jolt when he comes across passages which he cannot fit in with the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the example and spirit of his Divine Lord. These passages are found in the so-called imprecatory Psalms, such as Psalm 35:8: "Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall." Or Psalm 55:15: "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell (alive into sheol)." Or the maledictions found in Psalm 69:24, 27 and Psalm 109:10, 12, 18, 19.

Were these utterances the inspirations of God in the heart of the Psalmist, or the expressions of human frailty?

II. We find that David, the author of the greater number of the Psalms, was uniformly tender and forgiving towards his enemies. "The Spirit of Christ" was in the saints of the Old Testament before the Incarnation (1 Pet. 1:11) and produced Christ-like qualities in them. Hence we have the patience and faith of Abraham; the purity and magnanimity of Joseph; the meekness under provocation of Moses; the lamb-like gentleness of the suffering Jeremiah, etc. And in David we meet with similar features. In 1 Samuel 24:1-22 we read how he would not avenge himself on Saul when he had him in his power. David was forgiving to a fault, as we see in 2 Samuel 13:39; 18:32; 19:4-6 in his attitude to-

wards guilty Absalom and in the truly magnificent way he reacted to the vile behavior of Shimei (1 Sam. 19:21-23).

III. In the light of these facts we are bound to conclude that whatever was the purport of the imprecatory passages in the Psalms, there was no *personal* vindictiveness in them. The psalmist felt that the honor of God was involved in the eventual judgment on evil. Let me cite one example: "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloodthirsty men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and *thine enemies* take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O Jehovah, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: they are become *mine enemies*" (Psalm 139:19-22).

IV. Our Lord Himself made use of these imprecatory Psalms. In Luke 20:41-43 He quotes Psalm 110 which speaks of the time when His enemies will become His footstool, not by their having been persuaded by the sweet wooings of the gospel, but by the terrible judgments of the end-time. In Matthew 26:30 we read how after the Passover celebration, as they left the supper room for the Mount of Olives, they sang a hymn. It was the great Hallel hymn at the close of the Passover, made up of Psalms 113, 114, 117, 118. They speak of the sufferings and glories of the Messiah, and how His reign on earth will be ushered in by judgments: "All nations compassed me about: in the name of Jehovah I will cut them off. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: in the name of Jehovah I will cut them off. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; in the name of Jehovah I will cut them off."

V. When we read the 23d of Matthew, we find that the One who was "meek and lowly in heart" could also on occasions roar like a lion. There is language there denouncing hypocrisy and persistent closing of the eyes to truth, more scathing and severe, from the lips of the Incarnate Son of God than any in the imprecatory Psalms from the lips of David. Besides, where in all Scripture will you find such solemn warnings about the awful consequences of sin in the eternal world, about the worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched, as in the Gospels, and that from the lips of our holy Lord? (Mat. 25:46; Mark 9:42-49.)

VI. When we turn to the book of Revelation we find that the martyred saints, in the intermediate state, waiting in Paradise for the resurrection, cry out for the avenging of their innocent blood (see chap. 6:10). Doubtless when dying, they, like the martyr Stephen, prayed for those who put them to death. But in the spiritual world they share the mind of God about the necessity of judgment on matured evil and give expression to that conviction. So the hardly-pressed saints in the tribulation, knowing that the hour of God's judgment has come, bring down from heaven the plagues on an "Egypt" and "Sodom" and "Babylon"-like world. (See Rev. 8:3-5; 11:6; 18:20.)

VII. Finally, be it observed, that the imprecatory utterances in the Psalms have the final good of the offender in view. Psalm 83:16, 18 is a case in point: "Fill their faces with confusion, *that they may seek Thy name, O Jehovah.* Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; yea, let them be confounded and perish; *that they may know that*

Thou alone, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." For as the prophet Isaiah declared: when God's judgments are in the earth, "the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness." And so it is declared of our blessed Lord in Matthew 12:18-21: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well-pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, *till he send forth judgment unto victory*, and in his name shall the Gentiles hope."

XXII

The Psalms in the Light of Prophecy

I. It is well to remember that *earth* is the peculiar subject of the five books of Psalms. And in that, the Psalms are in harmony with the prophetic element of Holy Scripture, which has to do, not with heavenly things, but with the future of this earth, whether in judgment or in blessing.

Hence the Church, properly speaking, is not the theme of prophecy, because the Church belongs to heaven, heaven-born and heaven-bound; like the sheet Peter saw in his house at Joppa, it descended from heaven with its cleansed creatures, and returned to heaven. The calling out a heavenly company, united to Christ in glory, is really an interim in God's dealings with earth. This is the period of divine silence touching earth. He is not publicly judging, though overruling in a hidden way the manifestation of evil, which will be judged when mature. He is silently forming a heavenly Eve for the heavenly Man to share His heavenly life and His heavenly glory. Her life is now hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, her life, is manifested, she will be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3: 3, 4). Of all this, prophecy has nothing to say. It was a secret hid in God.

Now when we say that the Psalms make *earth* their subject, whether earth is considered as the theatre for the manifestation of divine good, or for the expression of the full development of evil generated by the enemy; the particular part of the earth on which the Psalms concentrate

is *the land of Israel*. In that land God revealed Himself to the Patriarchs—and then after the bondage of their seed in Egypt, from Moses to the Messiah. There the special activity of Satan has also been seen, culminating in the crucifixion of the Messiah. And there the greatest event in the history of this planet—the Incarnation, God manifest in the flesh—took place, spoken of as “*the mystery of godliness*.” And there also “*the mystery of iniquity*” will find its full expression, when the Man of Sin will be revealed, and sit in the Temple of God as God’s rival on earth.

II. However, there is one passage in the Psalms in which the present period is spoken of. Psalm 110:1 reveals the One whom David spoke of as “*my Lord*,” sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. Earth having cast Him out, the heavens have received Him; and there He is patiently biding His time, till He has His rights on earth. But the Psalm really looks on to the end-time and passes over the nineteen centuries which have already elapsed since the rejected Messiah was seated at God’s right hand, and the heavenly people of God were being gathered out. It contemplates the land of Israel as it will appear on the eve of Messiah’s reappearing, full of enemies; and then He will descend from heaven and put His feet on their neck.

III. There are many Psalms which speak of this time. Before the time of Israel’s blessedness there will be a time of unexampled darkness and sorrow. Thus Psalm 10 refers to “*the man of the earth*” (i.e., the contrast to “the Second Man who is of heaven”—1 Cor. 15:47, R. V.), persecuting the righteous. Psalm 12 also speaks of that time, when godly

men will have ceased and faithful men fail among the children of men; when the wicked walk on every side, and vile-ness is exalted among the sons of men; just on the eve of Jehovah's arising in judgment. Read also Psalms 14 and 53. They appear to be duplicates, but in Psalm 14 the oppressors of God's earthly people are addressed, while in Psalm 53, Israel itself. For that nation will have become infested with seven wicked spirits more wicked than the unclean spirit of idolatry that went out at the Babylonish captivity, a nation of blasphemers, *except for a remnant* who will suffer for their testimony then (See Mat. 12:43-45).

IV. For in the midst of the awful darkness of that time God will raise up a sack-cloth testimony in Jerusalem (spoken of in Rev. 11), like a John the Baptist calling for repentance and heralding the Coming One. And because of that remnant, true to Jehovah, Jerusalem, even though it had become like "Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified," could be spoken of as "the holy city" (Rev. 11:2, 8). That faithful remnant, such as God could not find in Sodom, will preserve Jerusalem from sharing the doom of Sodom.

V. The response of the remnant in that time of rebuke and blasphemy is heard over and over again in the Psalms. Take Psalm 74; there we hear one of the earliest cries of the awakening remnant. However, at the beginning they will feel their misery more than their sin. Else why say: "*Why?*" And the Jew is today continually saying: "Why?" though the answer is written large in His own Scriptures. When we come to Psalm 79 we hear at last the language of confession. See also Psalm 80. In that Psalm they feel the need of being divinely "quicken" and "turned," and bless-

ing is at last looked for from the rejected Messiah—the Man at God's right hand (verses 3, 7, 17-19). These Psalms transport us right into the midst of the conditions prevailing in Jerusalem at the time of the end.

VI. *The divine answer* will not be withheld. In Psalm 2 we have heaven's reaction to the confederacy of the apostate nations of Gentile Christendom, repudiating the very profession of Christianity, the Father and the Son. But Psalm 83 shows that this confederacy against Jehovah and His anointed is also against Israel. (Anti-semitism is, I believe, the harbinger of this totalitarian rejection of Christianity and of the nation out of which Christianity has sprung.) For if medieval centuries persecuted the Jews as "Christ-killers," modern totalitarian anti-semitism rejects them as "Christ-givers," as has recently been pointed out by Maurice Samuel in his book: *The Great Hatred*. Other Psalms take up this matter. See Psalms 46, 48, 124, how God will answer the cry of His oppressed people.

VII. How precious is this remnant in the sight of God! They are not seen as they are in human weakness and sinfulness, but as identified with Christ. He is Israel's first-fruits (Lev. 2:14-16) typified by the Meal-offering. Take Psalm 18, it is still unfulfilled. David is only a type here. The enemies of Messiah will be subdued under his feet, and He will then become "*the Head of the Gentiles*." But not only is the Messiah seen in His glorious Person. Christ mystical is also set forth. The sufferers in His cause are endowed with His imputed preciousness (see, for instance, how this wonderful Psalm is quoted in Hebrew 2:13 in the light of Second Samuel 22:3). The Messiah makes Himself

one with His suffering brethren. His beauty is put on them, as their sins were laid on Him when He died on the cross. So God ever saw the twelve tribes in their unity and order, represented by twelve loaves on His table in the sanctuary, with the frankincense upon them, whatever their state calling for judgment, otherwise. (Compare Lev. 24:6-9 with 10-23.)

VIII. Then there are the Psalms which celebrate the future triumph and glory. Take the well-known hundredth Psalm. There we hear regenerated and sanctified Israel calling upon all nations to worship the Jehovah God of Israel. There is no *national* worship now, whatever the pretensions of the so-called national churches of Europe. Before we can have national worship there must be saved nations. The first saved nation will be Israel, for Israel is God's firstborn nationally. Psalm 100 gives us a millennial picture. The nations today are sick and sad; before they can respond to Israel's call to worship they must be healed and gladdened. Read Psalms 95, 96, 97, 98 for this. Regenerated, sanctified, and Spirit-indwelt Israel will then be God's governmental and religious center on earth; Christ's righteous scepter and His holy judgments setting crooked things straight in the lives of the nations who will go forth from Zion.

IX. But the millennium is only the ante-chamber to still higher blessedness. As the feast of tabernacles had its eighth day, "the great day of the feast," so will the Messianic reign usher in a still more perfect order. Heaven and earth will be gathered together into one in Christ "in the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Eph. 1:9, 10). So the Psalms speak not only of the Messiah as "the Son of David," as "Head

of the Gentiles," but also as "Son of man" (Psa. 8 and 80). As such He will be Head and Lord of all creation. Already has He this title, but He has not enforced the title. Israel must first be "converted" and her "sins blotted out" (Acts 3: 19-21). Only in heaven is He owned at the present time as "Lord of all," but when the thousand years are ended, every evil power subdued, death itself destroyed (See 1 Cor. 15), creation will be set free from its groans and suffering, nature will celebrate His praise. The closing Psalms are the Hallelujahs of redeemed creation; the curse having been removed from earth; the Seed of the Woman having crushed the serpent's head.

X. The Psalms which describe the millennial Israel are very rich in content. Psalm 125 shows them to be a trusting people. Psalm 131, a humble people. Psalm 133, a united people. Psalms 122 and 134, a worshiping people. No longer will they be a crooked and perverse generation, but, through grace, a nation reproducing the features of the Messiah, who will then see in Israel the fruit of the travail of His soul.

AN AFTER WORD

An After Word

THE book of Psalms divides its 150 separate psalms into five groups. Each of the first four closes with a doxology. The last ends with five Hallelujah psalms. They are, I hold, prophetic of the story of Israel.

Group 1 comprises Psalms 1 to 40. We find in it the godly and the wicked discriminated, but not outwardly separated. We know from Mat. 13 that the Son of Man will “in the time of harvest,” which is “the end of the age,” send forth His angels and bring about this separation.

Group 2 is from Psalms 41 to 72. There this predicted separation is beginning to take place. But the method employed is similar to the way by which Israel was brought out of Egypt. They *went* out, but the Egyptians *thrust* them out. The opening psalm in this section shows the true worshiper separated from “the multitude.” The privileges of the temple and its services are denied him. He is cast off by an “ungodly nation.” But he turns to *God Himself* and to *the light of His countenance*, when bereft of outward means of grace.

Group 3 begins with Psalm 73 and ends with Psalm 89. It starts with telling us that only the *pure in heart* are now called “Israel.” The hypocritical man is rejected. The remnant alone is owned of God, and that remnant is the nucleus of a new nation.

Group 4 is from Psalm 90 to 106. It begins with two psalms which clearly belong together. Two men are contrasted in them, the first man and the Second. The first failed utterly and came under the power of death. The Second took up the fight in which the first was worsted and overcame.

He is the Seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head. And He established glory to God in the highest and on earth peace. It is therefore suitable that the next psalm should be "*a song' for the Sabbath Day*," the longed for Sabbath of a groaning and travailing creation, the time of the restitution of all things. God recovers His Sabbath, broken by the fall of man, in the Second Man. And earth also, weary of sin and strife enters into rest with Him. Regenerated Israel will then be in the midst of many nations in a warless world, and her land will be Eden restored. (See Psalms 95 to 100.)

The fifth section from Psalms 107 to 150 is similar to the fifth book of Moses. It gives a review of the long journey trod. Its *doctrine* ends in Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the collection, an acrostic of eight verses, taking up all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It celebrates the glories of the oracles of God once committed to Israel (Rom. 3:12) but now, at last, according to the terms of the promised *new* covenant, written in their hearts and minds. Thus will they obtain a righteousness which exceeds the merely external righteousness of their false guides, the Scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness of their own which they have gone about to establish, being ignorant of God's righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3). Israel under the new covenant, the Law of God within them, will then become *a Christlike nation*. For Psalm 1, which was true of Him only, in His holy, undefiled human life, will be their state, according to Psalm 119. The Messiah is Israel's "*First-born*" (Zech. 12:10) when they have repented of their unbelief concerning Him, He will become not only their Redeemer but their pattern. They will take character from Him.

The Psalms following the 119th psalm, in which God reaches His end in Israel, are of the nature of an appendix. There are first fifteen "Psalms of Degrees," (The Syriac Version translates "*Degrees*" with "*Ascent from Babylon*"; the word found in the Hebrew of Ezra 7:9). They give us the stages of a soul leaving Babylon for the glory-filled House of God. The soul reviews its journey, now that the goal is reached, as Moses does in the book of Deuteronomy, when on the borders of the promised land.

I need not say that the intense delight which the renewed heart and mind finds in the Scriptures, which the 119th Psalm witnesses, is the present experience of all in whom Christ's Spirit dwells. The oracles of God are the exclusive inheritance of the saints. They were not handed over to infidels, or to those who manipulate them with their natural mind, merely. The greatest enemy of the truth, the organ of "the spirit of anti-christ" which is already in the world, is not the fool who says in his heart that there is no God, but the intellectual high-brow who will not bow before the truth that God has "hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes."