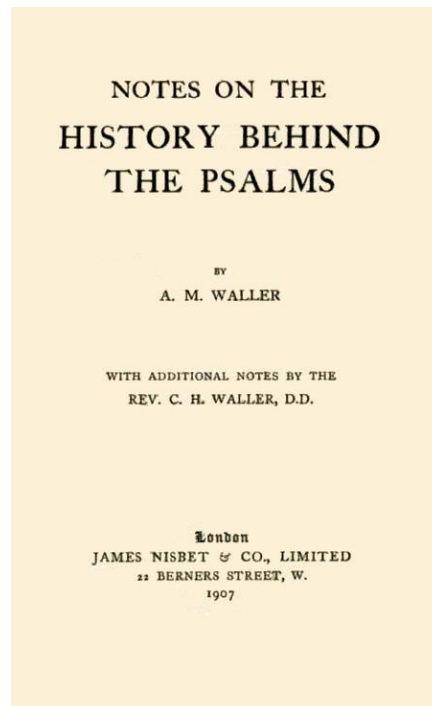


NOTES ON THE HISTORY BEHIND THE PSALMS



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WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES BY THE
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PERSONAL

Some years ago, finding myself very deaf, and otherwise unequal to Church going, I began to study the Psalms as a Sunday employment. My husband kindly allowed me to use his note-books and lectures: and I had also access to a good library, so that I could see what others had written.

I had no idea of publishing anything, but as I went carefully through each book, I found an internal coherence between the parts, as if some purpose governed the selection. This was new to me. Most commentators treated the Books as if events of many different dates were piled together without order or method. A distinction in the circumstances of each Book was soon clear to me. How far others will agree with me I cannot tell; but my missionary children wished for my little plan for their students. My husband permitted me to incorporate portions of his notes and lectures as I pleased. But the greater part of these “Notes” is his, not mine.

Even where, as in Part II. of Book V., I have gone further than he had written, I have “built a house with his bricks,” as the line of thought was suggested to me by what he had said!

May the result be a help and not a hindrance to those who “rejoice at the Word, as those who find great spoil.”

Mizrachah, Little Coxwell,
July 1907.

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BOOK I: THE PRAYERS OF DAVID THE SON OF JESSE

The Jews divided the books of the Old Testament into three parts, “Law,” “Prophets,” and “Psalms.” The “Law” includes the Pentateuch: the “Prophets” begin with Joshua: the “Psalms” begin the third part.

Thus it appears that the first chapter of Joshua and the first Psalm are the introduction to the

second and third parts respectively of the Old Testament.

In view of this fact the resemblance between the two passages is very striking. The Lord commands Joshua to “be strong and of a good courage,” and adds, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night: that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1.8). No man before Joshua had received orders to regulate his conduct by the words of a written book: and in Psalm i. a blessing is pronounced on every man who takes Joshua’s position in relation to the written Law of God. “Blessed is the man that . . . walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; . . . and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1.1,2,3). “Thus God’s written word has the authority of Law for those who live under the period of the Prophets. The Law and the Prophets together have the same authority for those who live during the Captivity and Return; and Law, Prophets, and Psalms were alike ‘Law’ to Him who came to fulfil all three, and whose obedience was determined by the predictions and requirements which they contained.”

Between Genesis and Revelation there is no Book like the Psalms. All the lines that begin in Genesis and end in the Apocalypse pass through the Psalter, and seem to join there. It is a Book which requires a greater grasp to hold it, and more varied knowledge to follow its ramifications, than any other in the whole Bible.

Of all human helps to the interpretation of Holy Scripture, to get a clear idea of the plan and structure of a Book takes the highest place. The structure of the Book of Psalms, as finally arranged, is very marked.

The composition of the Psalter as it comes to us from the keepers of the Oracles of God, extends over 1000 years. We reckon from Moses in Psalm 90. to the time of Ezra the Scribe, to whom Psalm 119. is generally ascribed. It is divided into Five Books, each of them with a well marked character and purpose; but these are so skilfully used as to be applicable to men under all circumstances, and in every age.

The Five Books are—

1. Psalms 1-41 inclusive.
2. Psalms 42-72 inclusive.
3. Psalms 73-89 inclusive.
4. Psalms 90-106 inclusive.
5. Psalms 107-150 inclusive.

They are easily identified in our English Bibles by the Doxology with which each book closes. The three first books have at the end of the Doxology a twice repeated “Amen.” The Fourth Book closes with “Amen, Hallelujah.” The Fifth Book with “Hallelujah, Hallelujah.”

We take the *first Two* Books to belong to the time of David, under the name of “The Prayers of David the son of Jesse” (Ps.72.20).

The *Third Book* describes the disruption of the Kingdom under Rehoboam.

The *Fourth Book* is the hymn-book of the Captivity.

The *Fifth Book* belongs to the Return and the rebuilding of the Temple and wall of Jerusalem.

The several Books seem to have been put together at the most critical periods of Jewish history.

- I and II. God's choice of a King, and His selection of a "Place."
- III. The revolt of the Ten Tribes and disruption of the Kingdom.
- IV. Captivity of the whole nation.
- V. An almost unparalleled return to their own land.

These are events which might well call forth prayers and praises to Jehovah.

We accept without question the titles of the Psalms in the Hebrew and in our English Bibles, as they were a part of the Psalms, and numbered amongst the verses handed on to us by the Jews themselves. They are a part of the text, and of equal authority. Titles in other versions have not the same authority.

Bishop Wordsworth says: "These titles contain independent information which could not have been evolved from the Psalms themselves by later induction, nor have been derived from any extant histories, and which is often of such a high antiquity as to have presented difficulties even in the age when the Septuagint Version was made, and to baffle the endeavours of critical ingenuity to explain them. Consequently these titles were justly regarded by ancient interpreters as of great value."¹

But what we most desire to establish is, that there is teaching and method in the arrangement and order of the Books of the Psalter: that each of the Five Books belongs to a well-marked period in the history of Israel: that the Psalms which they contain, even if they were written at an earlier date, are not a confused medley, but are clearly appropriate to the time when they appear in the Psalter, with a coherence of their own. Thus, if Psalms by David occur in each of the Five Books, though we may not be able to say why they did not appear before, we can always find their suitability to the time when they do appear. The Psalms of Asaph in the Third Book could only belong to him and to his time, as we hope to prove. Many of the Psalms in the Fourth Book, on the contrary, appear to have been brought forth from the Storehouse of the Levites, who had them in their keeping, though they seldom tell us then by whom they were written. We are left to gather that, either from the historical Books or from the New Testament; though we sometimes find traces of the hand of the Prophet Editor in the later version. (Cf. Ps.106.47, with its older version, 1 Chron. 16.35.) Various Psalms by David at the upbringing of the Ark to Zion come in with great force when the restoration of the Temple and Temple worship are in view, at the latter end of the Captivity in Book Four. We do not suppose that the use of these Psalms was necessarily begun when they appear in the Psalter. In the case of the Psalms in question, it was certainly not so. They were sung by Asaph and his brethren on a particular day when the Ark was brought to Zion (1 Chron.16.17). But they were also eminently suitable to the later occasion. What we deprecate is the taking Psalms which are in Books for certain periods, and ascribing them to subsequent events. Thus, if the first Two Books were delivered by David to his choir-masters as "the Prayers of David the son of Jesse" (Ps.72), how can Psalms 45,46 and 50, belong to the

¹ Wordsworth on the Psalms.

reigns of Jehoshaphat, Asa, and Hezekiah respectively, as some have suggested? Similarly in Book Three we are limited to the time of David's choir-masters by the titles of all the Psalms except one by David himself.²

Of course there were "Sons of Korah" both before and after that date. But we do not think the "interest of the Book" can "centre in the time of Hezekiah," nor can the seventy-sixth Psalm "describe the defeat of Sennacherib," as we hope to show in its place.

The grouping of some of the Psalms in each Book is worthy of most careful study, as it is full of teaching. It is also a great help in the interpretation of difficult passages. But perhaps it is more often connected with the Prophetical than the Historical basis of the Psalter. Thus 22, 23, 24 have to do with the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord; so have 91, 92, 93. But this aspect of the Psalms lies outside our present study.

The first two Books come to us under the name of the "Prayers of David the son of Jesse" (Ps. 72. 20).

But we do not take these words to mean that David was the author of all the Psalms contained in the two Books; still less that they include all his compositions; but that this was David's hymn-book or service-book, put together by his authority for public worship, and afterwards made use of in the Temple built by Solomon.

We have the record of David's choir in 1 Chron. 15.

"Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals; and the number of the workmen according to their service was: of the sons of Asaph . . . (here follow four names) under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king.

"Of Jeduthun . . . six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord.

"Of Heman . . . (fourteen names) all these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

"So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight" (1 Chron. 25.1-7).

But why should "the Prayers of David the son of Jesse" be a double Book? It comprises the first two Books of Psalms. Psalms 1-41 inclusive make one Book; Psalms 42-72, inclusive, form a second Book. It seems impossible to doubt that the title includes the two. There does not appear to be any difference of date between them. Both alike refer to events which occurred at the beginning and at the end of David's life. The first dated Psalm in the First Book is the third, which is entitled "A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son."

² It is not certain, though it seems probable, that Heman and Ethan of Psalms 88, 89, were the choir-masters, but Ethan was contemporary with Solomon (1 Kings 4.31).

The date thus given indicates that the First Book of the Psalter cannot have been put together in its present shape, before the last half of David's reign. And similarly, we find that the first Psalm associated with a distinct historical event in the Second Book is the fifty-first, which is concerned with the great sin of David's life.

Thus there is no particular reason for placing the date of the one earlier than the other. Moreover, there is a curious incidental proof that the First and Second Books of the Psalter are parallel, and that they both belong to David's life.

If we compare the closing Psalms of the two Books, we find many expressions common to them both;³ and the last five verses of Psalm 40 in the First Book reappear with but slight change in Psalm 70. in the Second Book. Both Psalms are ascribed to David. Then Psalm 41 is parallel with Psalm 71, which is David's last in the Second Book.

Ps.41 is a sick man's Psalm:

Ps.71 is an old man's Psalm: and they may both fairly suit the time described in 1 Kings 1, when David was in a state of collapse, confined to his bed-chamber. Yet, taking 1 King's 1 — which describes David's illness, and his making Solomon king, as parallel with 1 Chron. 23, where, after Solomon was made king, David regulated the affairs of the kingdom—it seems that the King was raised up again in answer to the prayers in the Psalms. Cf. Ps.71.23, "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, and my soul, which thou hast redeemed," with 1 Chron. 29.9, "David the king also rejoiced with great joy." We also hear that "David the king stood up upon his feet" to give his last charge to Israel (1 Chron. 28.2), though he had been confined to his bed in 1 Kings 1.

If these two Books do not differ in date, what is the difference between them? And why are they two, and not one? To these questions the history of David in the Chronicles, and the Psalter taken with it, supply the answer. We suppose these "Prayers" to have been put together for *public*—not private—use. When would Psalms for this purpose have been first required? Clearly when the public use of Psalms began. The occasion is explicitly told us in 1 Chron. It was when David brought the Ark to Zion. "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers, with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy." "So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass" (1 Chron. 15.16,19). "So they brought the ark of God and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it." . . . "Then on that day did David first ordain to give thanks unto the Lord by the hand of Asaph and his brethren" (1 Chron.16.1, and ver.7 R.V.). The service is given in 1 Chron. 16.

Verses 8-22 reappear Ps. 105.1-15;

Verses 23-33 reappear Ps. 96.1-13;

Verses 34, 35, 36 reappear Ps. 106.1,47,48 — all in the Fourth Book of the Psalter, just before the restoration of the Temple and its worship *at Jerusalem*.

"So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, Asaph and his brethren, to

³ Bishop Wordsworth has an interesting illustration of the parallels in his "Commentary."

minister before the ark continually as every day's work required; . . . and Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord . . . continually morning and evening . . . and with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen ... by name to give thanks to the Lord, because his mercy endureth for ever; and with them Heman and Jeduthun, with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God" (1 Chron. 16.37,39-42).

Here, then, we have two choirs—one at Zion before the Ark, at the Tabernacle of David, under the presidency of Asaph, the King himself also residing there; and another at Gibeon, before the Tabernacle, under Heman the Kohathite and the Sons of Korah.

These were the direct descendants of Korah the rebel, for "notwithstanding [the rebellion] the children of Korah died not " (Num.26.11). And that they should be brought near to God in a new kind of service, from the time of Samuel the Prophet, seems a singularly beautiful compensation for the denial of their mistaken aspirations in the wilderness, and for the severity of their punishment there.

So far as we know, Samuel—a descendant of Korah—was the first to establish Schools of the Prophets for Psalmody (1 Sam.11.5,19.20), and Samuel's grandson was Heman, to whom God gave fourteen sons and three daughters, all "under the hand of their father for song" (1 Chron.15.5,6).

Further, it appears that the Psalms were used both morning and evening as with us; for among the duties of the Levites under David we find "to stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord, and likewise at even" (1 Chron.23.30).

Is it possible to say which of the books was formed at Zion and which at Gibeon? We take the First Book of the Psalter to be the Zion Book, and the Second the one for use at Gibeon; because David was himself resident at Zion, and all the Psalms in the First Book that have an author specified in "the Title" are ascribed to David. The Second Book, on the other hand, begins with a group of eight Psalms inscribed, "For the sons of Korah," and Heman, the father, was in charge of the Psalmody at Gibeon. The most natural thought is that these Psalms were the work of Heman, who was "the king's seer in the words of God" (1 Chron.15.5), and therefore the most competent of all the musicians to act alone. After this, in the Second Book, a set of Psalms follow that may have been sent from Zion to Gibeon, from Asaph and David, who were at the head of affairs there; the King being "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," and Asaph the representative of the eldest among the families of Levi.

Another point arises for consideration. In the First Book, God is most frequently spoken of by the Covenant name of "Jehovah," and in the Second He is generally called God—Elohim. This is as it should be; for although the Tabernacle and the Altar were at Gibeon, yet Jerusalem was the city which Jehovah had chosen out of all the Tribes of Israel to "put his name there." Apparently Gibeon was not the seat of the Tabernacle by Divine choice; but because in Saul's reign the Tabernacle was in need of a place of refuge, and found it in the chief city of Benjamin—the Royal Tribe. There was a special reason for marking the Psalms used in Jehovah's dwelling with the name of Jehovah. It is called "the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there" (1 Kings 8.29). At Gibeon there was no such reason, and therefore the word Elohim sufficed.

This is specially to be noticed when the same Psalm, in slightly varying form, occurs in both Books; as the fourteenth Psalm of Book I., which occurs again as the fifty-third in Book 2. David has exhibited the same Psalm in substance, twice over, but with a slight variation, and with Elohim substituted for Jehovah in the second version. Again, the concluding verses in Psalm 40, in the First Book, recur as a whole Psalm—the seventieth—in the Second Book. The change of title is not quite so marked in this place, but it does occur several times. The eighteenth Psalm in the First Book is repeated with some variations from 2 Sam.22, but now both Jehovah and Elohim are used, though Jehovah is most frequently found. But there is not the same reason for the variation.

It does not seem necessary to follow in detail each Psalm of the First and Second Books. To do so would be to recount the life of David, which we can read in the history.

Some of the Psalms, however, cannot be tied to any historical event that we know of. The language of some of those in each Book, so far transcends any human interpretation, that we can only understand it of our Divine Lord. We know from St. Peter that “ the prophets enquired and searched diligently . . . what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow ” (1 Pet.1.10, 11), and we recognise some of His Revelations in the Psalter. Thus the second Psalm looks forward to the final triumph over all opposition, as it is set forth in Rev. 2.27; 19.15. The eighth likewise goes on until death itself is subdued (1 Cor. 15. 25, 26). Psalms 22 and 40 in Book I, and 45 and 69 in Book II, again speak of “suffering” or of “glory” beyond all human ken. We do not mean that some Psalms are prophetic, and others not so. They are all prophetic; but some of them go straight to the future, without any primary figure as a type; and we seem only to miss the fulness and depth, if we try to make one. Witness the forty-fifth Psalm, with the inadequate suggestions of interpreters that it refers to the marriage of King Solomon to a heathen princess, daughter of King Pharaoh; though she could not be allowed to dwell in Jerusalem because of her idolatry (2 Chron.8.11); or the marriage of King Joram to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab!⁴ But David is a well-known figure of our Lord, who is so often called the “Son of David,” and we see the force of this better in the Psalms than we do in the history itself. Indeed, a very interesting and instructive method of interpreting the Psalter can be found in the citations of particular passages in the New Testament, and their application to the History of the Church of God.

In Books I and II these passages point to the preparation of a King, and the search for the place of His Throne; but we are not without many clear intimations as to what experience of life and conflict are needful for the Ruler: what straits men fall into for want of Him: and notwithstanding this, what opposition awaits Him on His way to the Throne, and in His attempts to do judgment and justice among all His people.

Note.—The substance of parts of this chapter appeared in a paper by Dr. Waller in “*The Thinker*,” vol. v., now out of print.

BOOK 2: THE PRAYERS OF DAVID THE SON OF JESSE "BRING ME UNTO THY HOLY HILL"

We take the Second Book of the Psalter to be the Service Book at Gibeon of David’s two choir-masters, Heman and Jeduthun, who remained with the Tabernacle at Gibeon, after the Ark was brought to Zion (1 Chron. 16:39-42).

⁴ The latest suggestion that I have seen is that it refers to the unknown wife of Jehu!!

We have in Revelation xiv. a beautiful vision of two choirs, one on earth on Mount Zion, but the praises echo those of the heavenly harpers who sing, “as it were, a new song” before the throne; and these Songs are “poured over the heads” (Hebrew) of the “ransomed of the Lord” who come to Zion (Isa. 35:10). And they alone can learn them (Rev. 14:1-5).

The Songs of Mount Zion were collected in the First Book, and songs from thence were sent to the choir at Gibeon; but they were also permitted to produce some of their own, and the chief characteristic of them is the longing for God’s dwelling-place. We are reminded what a blessing it is to God’s people to have a centre of national worship—a place where to meet with God. And that Place means more than a Place, it means a Person. We desire to come not only to “Thy holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacle,” not only to the “altar of God,” but unto “God my exceeding joy” (Ps. 43.3, 4). If there is no One there to meet, why should we gather to meet Him? We follow His Anointed up and down in His wanderings, and we look forward to the time when He shall have a City, and a Palace, and a Throne.

That one word in Hebrew which is rendered Palace and Temple combines it all. The *Place* or *Palace* is made for the *Person*, and the *Person* makes the Palace or Place!

How true that is, we shall really know when we find that City of which it is written, “I saw no Temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it” (Rev. 21.22).

If space permitted it would not be difficult to show that the first eight Psalms of the Second Book are specially applicable to the Levites of the family of Samuel,⁵ in view of the fact that the God of Israel had now for the first time since the desecration of Shiloh, made choice of a Place to cause His Name to dwell in.

Through all the Songs of the Sons of Korah runs the note:

“We love the place, O Lord,
Wherein Thine honour dwells.”

It is David’s plea against gathering his soul with sinners (Ps. 26.8,9). But if he struck the vein, the Sons of Korah have worked it out.

The first two Psalms of the Gibeonite Book (Psa. 42 and 43) express the longing of the pious Levite for a Sanctuary where he might meet with God. The forty-fourth, by its language in many points of detail, recalls the Book of Judges—the book of the time of no-king, with the further aggravation of the time of no-place, which followed in the days of Samuel, when God withdrew the light of His Presence from Shiloh, and had not as yet revealed Himself elsewhere.

Thus the first Psalms of the Second Book express the two great wants of Samuel’s day—the want of the Place, and the want of a Saviour, Judge, or King.

In the following Psalms we have the rejoicing of the Psalmists of Israel when the two-fold want is supplied. Ps.45 is the thanksgiving for the King who will reign in righteousness for ever and ever. Psalms 46 and 47 suggest that a Place has been caught sight of, where they

⁵ Heman was Samuel’s grandson (1 Chron. 6.33).

may worship Him. Ps. 48 names and calls it "*Zion*" for the first time in this Book. And the last note of that Psalm, that the God who caused His Name to dwell there, will be our God for ever and ever, and "our guide over [not unto] death," is the keynote of the "sure mercies of David," that Resurrection victory, which supplies the subject of the following Ps.49.

In Exodus we are told that God spake to Moses on Mount Sinai, asking for an offering from all who gave "willingly with their heart," to make a Sanctuary for Him, that He "might dwell among them" (Ex. 25.2,8).

The first reason for the choice of a Place where animals might be slain, seems to have been to protect the children of Israel from the danger of eating blood, as "the blood which is the life" was appointed for an atonement, until the type was fulfilled by the outpouring of the blood of Christ on the Cross.

We first hear of a place for sacrifice in the command to bring to the door of the Tabernacle in the wilderness all that they would kill, and the Priest should sprinkle the blood upon the altar at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, "and they shall no more offer their sacrifice unto devils after whom they have gone a whoring" (Lev. 17.3,4,7,10,11). This law, so far as killing flesh for food is concerned, was relaxed in the land (Deut.12.11,15).

Again, in view of their entrance into the land which God had promised to give them, the commands were very explicit in order to preserve them from the idolatry of the Amorites, who "served their gods upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree." "Ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God. But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come" (Deut. 12.2,4,5).

The Place where the Tabernacle of the Congregation was set up after they had taken possession of the chief part of the Promised Land was at Shiloh (Joshua 18.1). There seven tribes received their inheritance by lot: there the possessions of the Levites were appointed throughout the land (Joshua 21). There the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel (1 Sam.3.21). But when the people "Provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their . . . idols he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men" (Ps.78.58-60). "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel" (Jer.7.12).

Then He chose "the Mount Zion⁶ which he loved," and though its brightness is now dimmed, there is a vision yet to be fulfilled, when "a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev. 14.1).

Meantime our Lord has come, and true worshippers may pray everywhere (John 4.21-23; 1 Tim.2.8). "For from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place incense shall be offered unto his name: and a pure offering" (Mal.1.11).

⁶ David offered sacrifices in Zion (1 Chron, xvi.1). But the "House of Sacrifice" (2 Chron. vii.12) was chosen in Mount Moriah, in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Chron. iii.).

BOOK 3: THE DISRUPTION OF THE KINGDOM

“What portion have we in David? To your tents, O Israel!”

The Third Book of the Psalter represents the Disruption of the Monarchy after the death of Solomon.

It would appear that most of the Psalms in this Book were produced during the life-time of David’s great choir-masters: “Asaph,” “Heman,” and “Ethan”—or “Jeduthun”—who led the Psalmody in Solomon’s Temple, and survived the separation of the Kingdoms.

They were descended from the three sons of Levi, “Gershom,” “Kohath,” and “Merari”: and their appointment to their office is recorded in the First Book of Chronicles.

“These are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after that the ark had rest. And they ministered before the dwelling-place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order” (1 Chron.6.32).

They were divided into two choirs after David brought the Ark to Mount Zion—as we found in Books 1 and 2 of the Psalter; but we learn in the Book of Kings that they were again united when Solomon brought the Tabernacle and the Ark into the Temple on Mount Moriah. “Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel . . . unto King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion . . . And the priests took up the ark, and they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up . . . And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim ” (1 Kings 8.1-6).

The leaders of the singers are mentioned by name at the Dedication of the Temple.

“Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets; it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud” (2 Chron. 5.12-14).

Nothing further is recorded about them during Solomon’s reign; but after the disruption of his kingdom the expulsion of all the Levites from amongst the ten tribes was one of the first acts of Jeroboam when he set up the golden calves and made priests of the lowest of the people.

The seventy-third Psalm tells the sorrows of the Levites when Jeroboam “cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made priests after the manner of the nations of other lands” (2 Chron.13.9). The Levites had certain towns and villages throughout the country given them by God, where they were to dwell, and to teach the people around

them the Law of God, His ways and His worship. They also taught them Psalms of praise and prayer, and how to sing them. And as they went to Jerusalem by turns to the Temple service all the year round, they kept up the habit of going to Jerusalem to worship, and made it seem an easy and natural thing to do. Every fortnight there was a fresh set of Levites required for duty at the Temple, who came up from the country and took their turn. But when Jeroboam set up the golden calves, and forbade his people to go to Jerusalem, every Levite had to choose between obeying God's law or the command of the King. The Levites would not obey Jeroboam, but left their homes like one man, and went up to Jerusalem. "And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to Rehoboam out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possessions, and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord: and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made " (2 Chron.11.14,15).

When the Levites came to dwell in Judah, the revenues of the Temple must have been seriously affected. For the tithe of all Israel went to the Levites by law. Of this tithe, the Levites paid tithe to the priests, who were chiefly—though not entirely—supported by it. The priestly cities were, with one exception, in the territory of Judah and Benjamin — thirteen cities with their suburbs (Joshua 21.19). But the cities of the Levites were all amongst the ten tribes—thirty-five cities with their suburbs (Joshua 21.41; Num. 35.7). When the Levites came to dwell in Judah, the tithe of the ten tribes and all the Levitical dwellings remained with Jeroboam; so that all that was left for the support of the Levites would be the tithe of Judah and Benjamin, and the tithe of this tithe would be available for the priests. This disestablishment of the whole Levitical Church in Israel will explain the words of Asaph in Ps.73.10, "Therefore his people return hither [to Jerusalem], and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them."

Then comes the question, Why do those who serve God suffer thus? The answer is found "in the sanctuary." The prosperity is but for a moment, the awakening will be terrible. But to those who have "left all and followed Me," I give Myself; as He had said before, "I am their inheritance." And Asaph answers, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? 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).

When the Levites left Jeroboam's kingdom they were not alone; we read, "And after them out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers." After the coming of these refugees, for three years Rehoboam walked in the way of David and Solomon; but when he had "strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him" (2 Chron.12.1). "And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land; and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel" (1 Kings 14.22-24).

But this apostasy could not pass unpunished.

"And it came to pass that, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord, with twelve hundred

chariots and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt: . . . and he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.”

This invasion by the Egyptian King evidently produced great alarm in Judah, for Shemaiah the Prophet found Rehoboam and all the princes of Judah “gathered together at Jerusalem because of Shishak. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The Lord is righteous. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance;⁷ and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king’s house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.⁸ . . . And when he [the king] humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well” (2 Chron.12.1-12), or as the margin of our Bibles reads it, “and yet in Judah there were good things.”

If we may venture to suggest an interpretation of these “good things,” we shall probably find it in the loyalty of the Priests and Levites to the worship of Jehovah and the service of the Temple. It is inconceivable that three years after they had given up so much for God they should have turned aside to the idolatrous practices of Rehoboam and his princes; and the Third Book of the Psalter gives ample evidence of their steadfastness.

The invasion of Judah by Shishak, King of Egypt was a terrible thing for the impoverished people of Judah. The capture of all the fenced cities of Judah, of Jerusalem itself, with the plunder of the Temple, and of the King’s house, cannot have been achieved without resistance on the part of Rehoboam’s numerous army; and the Egyptian host, being yet more numerous, there must have been considerable slaughter; but of this no details are given in the Historical Books. The Psalms of the Third Book of the Psalter, which evidently belong to this period, supply these details. The seventy-third Psalm gives the burdens of the expatriated Levites; Psalms 74, 76, 79 give the missing details of the Egyptian war; they tell of the dead and unburied bodies of the slaughtered Israelites; of the damage to the Temple, and the defiling of the sanctuary; of the burning of the synagogue-meeting places; of the prisoners carried away; of the mocking assurance of their enemies that God would not deliver them. “Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses which thou swearest unto David in thy truth?” (Psa.89.49).

Then, on their repentance and humbling themselves before God, we have the restraining of the wrath of the enemy, and His rebuke to their hosts, and possibly a hint of the means employed in the “judgment heard from heaven” (Psa.76.8). But the Psalmist warns the Israelites to keep the vows that they made in their extremity, and not to mock the mighty and terrible God.

⁷ Cp. Psalm 76.10, “The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

⁸ Note that it was Shishak who sheltered Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon (1 Kings xi.40), and probably he thought now to help Jeroboam by coming against Rehoboam and Judah.

PSALM 76

Some commentators have desired to assign the seventy-sixth Psalm to the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the reign of Hezekiah (Isa.37.36). But that army was not in Jerusalem, or in Palestine, when 185,000 Assyrians were slain by the Angel of the Lord. The Assyrian King was many miles away in Lower Egypt, on his way to fight *with Tirhahah*, King of Ethiopia, when he met with that great disaster.⁹ Moreover, we read in Isaiah, "Thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city [Jerusalem] nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it" (Isa. 37.33). But Psalm 76 tells us that the victory of the God of battles was won at *Salem*, and at "his dwelling place in Zion. There brake he the *arrows of the bow*, the shield and the sword, and the battle," so that it could not have been the Assyrian host. Also the smiting of the horses is not a feature of the Assyrian defeat, as it is here. Shishak had twelve hundred chariots and threescore thousand horsemen (2 Chron.12.3). And in the Psalm we read, "At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both *chariot and horse* are cast into a deep sleep" (Ps.76.6). Besides, this is a Psalm of *Asaph* "who must have been dead long before the reign of Hezekiah."

The frequent references to Egypt in these Psalms (Psa.76.14; 78 throughout; Psa.80.8; Psa.81.5,10), coupled with the absence of any but the most casual reference to the other great Gentile powers, go far to prove that they belong to a much earlier date than that of the Assyrian invasion, or the Babylonish Captivity, to which they have often been referred. But it is a well-known property of Holy Scripture to present God's dealings with men on particular occasions, in such a form as to be suitable to subsequent times. Inspired utterances gather such fulness from the added experience of ages, that men have tried to upturn their foundations by an argument which amounts to this: 'The Psalms cannot have been written in the earlier days of Israel, because they are so suitable to the later days'! As well might they say, 'the Song of Moses cannot have been written for the Exodus of Israel, because it is even more suitable to the defeat of the Spanish Armada'!" (C.H.W.)

There is not any mention of Priests and Levites amongst those who rebelled against Jehovah at that time: and the Third Book of the Psalter proves that there was a "faithful remnant" amongst them, as there had been several times before in the History of Israel. When Aaron made the golden calf at Sinai, and Moses asked "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come to me," it was "the sons of Levi who gathered themselves together unto him" (Exod.32.26). A little later Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the Priest, "turned away God's wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous for his God" (Num.25.11-13). His descendant¹⁰ Zadok was faithful to King David when Abiathar joined the rebellious Adonijah against him (1 Kings 25, 26).

The faithfulness of the "sons of Zadok that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me" shall be remembered and rewarded whenever Ezekiel's Temple shall be built (Ezek.44.15). Of this particular faithfulness to the charge of the sanctuary, we have no record unless it has to do with the time of Rehoboam and the Third Book of the Psalter. At many critical times in the history of Israel, a man of the Tribe of Levi is the "Saviour." After Moses and Aaron we have Samuel; and Jehoiada, and Zechariah his son, and Hilkiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Ezra, and John the Baptist, who appeared in times of difficulty and danger; and they were all alike teachers of the ways of Jehovah.

⁹ Herodotus (Book ii. 141).

¹⁰ Zadok was descended in a direct line from Phinehas (1 Chron. vi.50-52).

David's choir-masters were all Levites, and as they had their dwellings and possessions in the territories of the Ten Tribes, they gave up much for God. If we examine the internal evidence, we shall see that no one but these Levites could have written these Psalms! No one else that we can name had the double interest that is manifested so strongly both in the Temple at Jerusalem, when the Egyptians defiled and injured the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and also in the children of Joseph, and the grief at their rebellion, which is shown to be hopeless, as God had not chosen the Tribe of Ephraim but the Tribe of Judah, and the House of David, and Mount Zion which He loved. The Levites were affected personally, professionally, and nationally by the disruption of the kingdom. Personally, because they lost their inheritance and their home. Professionally, because Jeroboam cast them out from executing their office. Nationally, because they loved to think that the twelve Tribes were God's chosen people, with whom He would for ever dwell. Their sorrow is expressed in these Psalms. We have also abundant proof that the writers were familiar with their former deliverances, which were written in "the Book" that was in the keeping of "the Priests the Levites" (Deut.17.18). Especially the Exodus and the deliverance from Egypt are dwelt upon at the time of the Egyptian invasion: the march through the wilderness: the victories over Sisera: and Zebah and Zalmunna: and the Ephraimite destruction of Oreb and Zeeb. Could not their God have delivered them again if they had put their trust in Him, instead of "setting up strange gods"? "Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts: cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

The Third Book of the Psalter is begun by Asaph, who was the chief singer at Jerusalem (1 Chron. 16.37). But in order to enter into his deep grief at the disruption of the Kingdoms, and the idolatry and corruption of the Kingdom of Jeroboam, we must remember that the inheritance of the family of Gershon—to which Asaph belonged—was entirely amongst the Ten Tribes (see Joshua 11.6), so that in coming to Jerusalem he lost his home and his inheritance. His eleven Psalms represent the double interest of his position. But his terrible grief shows itself in many of his words; some of them even foreshadow the grief of our Lord when He wept over Jerusalem—e.g., "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways" (Ps.81.13).

We think that Psalms 73, 74, 76, 79 are at Jerusalem, and the region of Shishak's invasion; 78, 80,81, and perhaps 82 are for the House of Joseph, and express the earnest longing for their return to Jehovah. The other three Psalms by Asaph are less distinctly marked for the ten tribes or the two. Many years afterwards Hezekiah "commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer" (2 Chron.29.30).

Another grief that specially affected the Levites is referred to in Psalm 74: "They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land" (verse 8). The word synagogue is also translated "congregation." These were the places of assembly for instruction and worship. It is sometimes thought that for an Israelite the going up to the Temple at Jerusalem answered to our going to Church! But this can hardly have been so, as only the males were required to go to Jerusalem, and that but three times a year; the rest of the family would go twice in three years, at the feast of the second tithe! The Israelites must have had meeting places where, on the Sabbath Day, Levites, and perhaps "Sons of the Prophets," may have led their worship. We know that Jehoshaphat sent princes and Levites and Priests to teach the people in their own cities (2 Chron.17.7-9). And it may be that this was merely the re-establishment of a former system which had fallen into decay. Whether this is so or not, the reference to "synagogues" in Ps. 74.8 need not imply that the later synagogue system had already been elaborated; but only that meeting-places which had been in use were now destroyed.

The burning of all these houses was a very serious matter, and it must have been partly the work of the Egyptians,¹¹ and partly that of Jeroboam—if indeed Jeroboam and Shishak, who was Jeroboam’s friend and patron—did not work together in this destruction.

Moreover, the King and the Princes of Judah were told by Shemaiah the Prophet that the men of Judah should “know the service” of Shishak (2 Chron.12.8). “The, sorrowful sighing of the prisoners” is the Psalmist’s version (Prayer Book Ver.). A curious confirmation of this is found to-day in Luxor (Thebes) in the ruined temple of Ammon. “Among the numerous historic sculptures of this temple are some that commemorate the successful campaign of Shishak (or Sheshonk) against Rehoboam king of Judah.”¹² “There Shishak is depicted on the wall. In his hand he holds about ten strings, which are twisted round the necks of long rows of Jews. The tops of these figures have Jewish heads, with long hair, large noses, and pointed beards. The lower parts are rounded off, and contain in hieroglyphics the names of the cities of Judah which Shishak took in Jeroboam’s reign.”¹³

“How perilous unchecked literary criticism may be is seen ... by the repudiation of a conquest of Judaea by Shishak, and the invention of a reading of ‘Cushi’ in the face of Shishak’s own sculpture of his conquest.”¹⁴

Is it possible that the eighty-eighth Psalm, by Heman the Ezrahite in the Third Book, is written by one of these captives? It is like the cry of our Lord upon the cross. God is still the “God of his salvation,” like the “My God” of the twenty-second Psalm; but the present suffering has no other glimpse of the “glory that should follow,” unless the next Psalm is accepted to make a pair with it, and answer its perplexities with the mercy and faithfulness of God!

But to return to the Psalms of Asaph and the calamities of the war with Shishak. In Psalms 74. and 79. we hear how the sanctuary itself was defiled, its “carved work” (see 1 Kings 6.18-32) hewn down; its treasures despoiled. Then the slaughter was tremendous, till it seemed as if no one was left to bury the dead; and the heathen reproached the great Name of Jehovah as if He could not deliver His own people or His Place. But in the seventy-fifth Psalm he sees that the Lord has a full answer to all that is done or spoken against Him. The dregs of His wrath shall be “wrung out” to His enemies, and the righteous shall be exalted.

Asaph does not, however, limit his distress to the desecration of the Temple and the failure of Judah; he is quite as much grieved at the revolt of the ten tribes from the worship of Jehovah and the rule of the House of David. In the seventy-eighth Psalm he sets forth all possible arguments to persuade Ephraim to return; and he shows at length how God led them through the wilderness and fed them, yet they turned away from Him. Then He punished them, but they partly repented and returned to Him, and were forgiven because! He was “full of compassion.” Yet again they “provoked him with their high places,” and then He “forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,” and “refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah and mount Zion,” and David His servant to be their king. Asaph longed that Ephraim should share these blessings, and he prays that God would “save us” and “we shall be saved”: and that He would “turn us,” and he speaks of “our

¹¹ That Egypt is referred to there can be no doubt. “Dragon,” ver. 13; “Leviathan,” ver. 14.

¹² The “Popular Encyclopedia.”

¹³ Letter written from Luxor, January 30, 1902, by Mrs. F. O. Lasbrey (*nee* E F Waller)

¹⁴ “*Researches in Sinai*, 1906,” by Professor Flinders Petrie.

neighbours” and “our enemies,” and identifies himself with the sorrows of the revolted tribes. In the eightieth Psalm Asaph appeals to the “Shepherd of Israel” to bring back His flock; reminding Him how He led all the children of Rachel, “Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,” in the wilderness, where these three tribes marched and encamped together in the third division. Now Benjamin is in one Kingdom; Ephraim and Manasseh in another. But God, the “Lord God of Hosts,” can “turn them”; and He can “return to them himself, and visit the vine that he had planted,” and “we shall be saved.”

Again, in Psalm 81, Asaph reminds the Ten Tribes that God ordained for the first day of the seventh month, a memorial of “blowing of trumpets,” and on the fifteenth day the “feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord” (Lev. 23.24,34). But Jeroboam had ordained a feast in the eighth month, “even the month which he had devised of his own heart,” and he offered upon the altar sacrifices unto the calves that he had made” (1 Kings 12.32,33). “But my people would not hearken unto me, and Israel would none of me.” . . . “O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their enemies. . . . He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the stony rock should I have satisfied thee” (Psalm 81.11-13).

In the eighty-second Psalm Asaph tells of judgment to come. God has already taken His place, and those who held themselves as Gods should “die like men”: but God should Himself inherit all nations.

We have not any historical background to suggest for the eighty-third Psalm, but we do not think the Jehoshaphat solution offered by some writers is a satisfactory one (2 Chron.20). Several of the nations named in the Psalm are not mentioned amongst Jehoshaphat’s opponents, and “Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph,” is not “Asaph,” to whom the Psalm is ascribed in the title. But we are told several times that there “was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days” (1 Kings 14.30). “And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam” (1 Kings 15.7). If we think of the disruption of the Kingdoms, and all that it meant to the historic Twelve Tribes, we can see that the occasions of war must have been endless, and that it was only when the kings of Judah left off the worship of Jehovah and became calf-worshippers like the Ten Tribes, that any semblance of peace could exist between them.¹⁵

Asaph is still mindful of his desire for the return of the Ten Tribes to the worship of the true God; and the aim of all his prayers is “that they may seek Thy Name, O Lord” (verse 16).

The eleven Psalms by Asaph in the Third Book, are followed by Psalms 84 and 85 for the sons of Korah. Psalm 86 is by David, 87 and 88 again for the sons of Korah. We saw in the eight Psalms in Book 2 for the sons of Korah, that the desire of these Levites was for the Place where God would meet with His people. They still dwell on this aspect of the Divine favour. These Psalms may have been composed before the disruption of the Kingdom, and produced by the Levites afterwards, like the Psalm of David (the eighty-sixth). On the other hand, some of the words in Psalm 84 gather force if they belong to a time when Jeroboam forbade the Ten Tribes to go up to worship God at Jerusalem. The office of the sons of Korah was to keep “the gates of the tabernacle” in their turns (1 Chron.9.19; 1 Chron.26.12-19); and the Psalmist says he would rather be a door-keeper there, than remain in “the tents of wickedness.”

¹⁵ See Notes on *Hosea and Amos* by Dr. C. H. Waller.

PSALM 85

The historical background of the eighty-fifth Psalm is probably to be found in the reign of Asa, the grandson of Rehoboam, who came to the throne twenty years after the death of Solomon. It was a time of great peace and hope. The King put away the idols, and renewed the altar of Jehovah, and “gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon; for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him; So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month . . . and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul. . . . And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them” (2 Chron. 15.9-15). This is the only place in the history of the Kingdoms where we find mention of the keeping of the feast of Pentecost. The Psalmist might well say, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” in the associations of that day with the giving of the law, and the promise of the “Prophet like unto Moses.”¹⁶ This feast was afterwards crowned by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).

PSALM 86 – A PRAYER OF DAVID.

Commentators seem to be impressed with the correspondence of petitions in this Psalm with those to be found elsewhere. But a fresh setting often adds force to words: and we may be assured that Scripture does not contain any “vain repetitions.” And here we find the prophecy—not yet fulfilled—that “all nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.” The words are taken up and sung by those who stand upon the sea of glass in Rev. 15. after the “victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark.”

PSALM 87

Again the Sons of Korah are rejoicing over Mount Zion and the excellent things that are spoken of her.

In Psalm 86 David prophesies that “all nations shall come and worship before the Lord” (ver. 9); but now God Himself names Egypt and Babylon, and others who had been the enemies of His people as “among them that know me” (ver. 4). It reminds us of the time when Jacob was to go down into Egypt to Joseph, and God spoke to him, saying, “I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again” (Gen.46.3,4).

If Jeremiah and Baruch and the “good figs” remembered this Psalm, surely it must have given them comfort to know that the countries where they went to sojourn in captivity would one day “know God.”

PSALM 89

The historical background of Psalm 89 is the same as that of the earlier Psalms in the

¹⁶ Compare Exod.20.19, Deut. 5.28, and Deut. 18.15-18.

Book:—the invasion of Judea by Shishak and his hosts, when he “brought his strongholds to ruin” (cf. 2 Chron. 12.3,4), and inflicted so much damage on the Temple and on Jerusalem, that even the haughty spirits of Rehoboam and his Princes were humbled before God.

It is interesting to compare this last Psalm in Book 3 with Psalm 72—the last Psalm in Book 2 of the Psalter. The promises to the anointed King are cited in both Psalms: God’s covenant with him to give him large dominions and an everlasting kingdom. But the later Psalm repeats—what the earlier one leaves out—the chastisement that disobedience would surely bring, as God had told David by the mouth of Nathan the Prophet (2 Sam.7.14). Now the Psalmist implores a renewal of former loving-kindnesses which were sworn unto David, and that the Lord would remember the reproach “wherewith thine enemies . . . have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.”

Note by Dr. Waller on the Topics and Titles of the two last Psalms in Book 3:

“If a Book of the Psalter belongs to a period of darkness followed by a return of sunshine, it is natural that the closing Psalm should furnish some intimation of the change in prospect. The close of David’s reign was somewhat overclouded by his illness and the troubles that preceded it. But the coronation of Solomon (twice) in his father’s life-time, the determination of the site of the Temple, and the distinct Divine intimation that Solomon was to begin by building it, shed considerable brightness on the cloud, if they did not absolutely dispel it. The close of the Second Book of the Psalter with Psalm 72, a poetic version of Solomon’s prayer for the wisdom needed for his reign, is so appropriate as to need no comment. The Third and Fourth Books, as we point out in these pages, belong to periods of decline and disaster, leading to recovery. The decline of the Kingdom in Book III., and the captivity and desolation of the Place in Book IV., alike require a ray of light at eventide to break the darkness. In the Fourth Book this is manifest in the prayer for the Return with which the Doxology presents us (Ps. 106), and ‘the time to favour Zion’ clearly indicated in Psalm 102, as well as the thanksgiving that anticipates it (Ps. 103), and the reminiscences of Israel’s going out and coming in (Psalms 105, 106).

“It seems not unsuitable to pay some attention to the closing Psalm of Book 3, wherein the light of the ‘sure mercies of David’ on which the continuance of his Kingdom rests, is so beautifully set forth, and for the last time in the Canon of the Old Testament.

“The brightness of the prophetic prospect in Psalm 89 is the more effectively presented in contrast to the dense gloom of the cloud above it, in Psalm 88, which is unrelieved by a single gleam of sunshine. We see the blackness of the storm above, but the sun is clear below for a brief space, in which it finds just enough room for setting. Heman and Ethan record the deepest depression of the decline of the throne of David, and the brightest anticipation of its return to glory—Heman in the darkest Psalm of the Psalter (Ps. 88), and Ethan in the glorious anticipation of the sure mercies of David in Psalm 89, which finishes the Third Book.

“I see no reason why the eighty-eighth Psalm may not have been written in Captivity in Egypt (see page 42). That Captives were taken, the pictures of Shishak testify to this day. Heman may have been among them. The disgrace to the Royal Tribe of Judah and to the ministers of the Temple would press more keenly on a Levite of the family of Judah than on another man.

“And when we come to Psalm 89, we find the promise of sure mercy to David drawn out at

greater length than in any other passage.

Recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and in 1 Chronicles 17, mentioned by Isaiah (Isa.55.3) as open to the Gentiles, and brought out by St. Paul in his first recorded sermon to both Jews and Gentiles at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13.34), it is expressly interpreted of the resurrection from the dead. For it is only in a life that has passed beyond the reach of death, that any ‘mercies’ can be ‘sure.’

“But the application of this truth to David and David’s son (both Solomon and our Lord), and to his successors on the throne, and his children generally, is drawn out in Psalm 89.19-52, at such a length, and in such fulness of exposition, as is not found anywhere else in Holy Scripture. The force and point of all this in this particular Psalm—the last of the Third Book—when once noticed, is obvious and very striking.” C.H.W.

The Doxology at the end of the Third Book does not mention “the Lord God of Israel,” as do Books 1 and 2 (Psalm 41.13; Psa.72.10). But we are reminded that the Ten Tribes had separated themselves from the House of David, saying “they had no portion in him”; “To your tents, O Israel;” “and they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves” (2 Kings 17.16). And as time went on, they departed still further from God, until He removed them from their land. Then they must have learned in Captivity to cast away their idols, and return to God, for “It is a matter of express record that in the return the inhabitants of Jerusalem included not only the children of Judah and Benjamin, but also of Ephraim and Manasseh” (1 Chron.9.3, with Neh. 11.1. See also Ezra 7.7; Ezra 3.1). And “the sacrifices recognise the twelve tribe community” (Ezra 6.17,21; 7.3-5; Neh. 7.46). So that again at the close of Book 4 we find “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting, and let all the people say Amen, Hallelujah ” (Ps.106.48).

We have, then, in the Third Book of the Psalter the “hymn book” of a disestablishment and disendowment such as the world has never seen again. There is not only the disruption of the Twelve Tribes, but a deliberate introduction of idolatry; not only the spoiling of the revenues of the Priests and Levites, but a cessation of all support of religion by the State. Coupled with this, a foreign invasion, a pollution of God’s Temple, disaster in war, and apostasy at home. Truly these are not themes which appeal only to Judah and Israel. While the Church is the Church Militant she is beset ever by dangers like these; and therefore these Psalms must ever be appropriate to her.

NOTE BY DR. WALLER.

It so happens that the titles of the last two Psalms (Psa. 88,89) are at once among the most complete and the most difficult of all the titles in the Psalter. Perhaps a few words on this much disputed subject may be allowed here.

THE TITLE OF PSALM 88

“A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. According to their Precentor. Upon (or to) Mahalath leannoth—a Maschil by Heman the Ezrahite.”

There are six points in this title which I understand thus:—

1. The Psalm is “a song”—possibly intended for a solo.
2. It belongs to the collection of the “Sons of Korah,” the Kohathite choir, and is from their book. Thence the Editor of Book 3 had it.
3. It has the imprint of the Master of that particular choir; the setting has his approval.
4. It is upon *Mahalath leannoth*, whatever that may mean. It is probably a musical direction; but I should certainly not venture (with the Revisers of the Old Testament) drily and concisely to translate by “set to” Mahalath Leannoth, as the question “How do you know that?” is one that no mortal can answer.
5. It is a Maschil. This again has no certain interpretation. The only conjecture I can offer is, that Maschils in the Psalter are not Michtams. Michtams in the Psalter are often accompanied by the direction “*al-taschith*,” “Do not alter or change anything.” I fancy that Maschils are in some sense adaptable or not unalterable, in which Michtams are not. But this is only a guess, and may be wrong.
6. The Author of the Psalm was Heman the Ezrahite.

One other observation I would make upon the *words* of the title. The phrase “according to the Chief Musician,” or Precentor, may have a spiritual meaning, as Jerome saw. He translates it by *victori*, for a Conqueror, or, as in Revelation, “To him that overcometh.”

Our Lord’s repeated use of this phrase in Revelation, and the fact that the Hebrew word for Precentor or Chief Musician means literally “conqueror,” and is recognised as a title of the Messiah by Jewish interpreters, seem to help us in this direction. I have no doubt that historically “Choir-Master” or “Precentor” is what the word means. But it is undeniable that spiritual meanings may underlie historical expressions in Holy Scripture, without destroying the literal sense.

THE TITLE OF PSALM 89

“Maschil, by Ethan the Ezrahite”

This title pairs with that of Psalm 88 Heman and Ethan appear as brothers in the Tribe of Judah among the posterity of Zerah, the brother of Pharez (1 Chron.2.6).

It is noticeable that while the family of Pharez is traced through many branches and noted for its increase and multiplication—“Let thy house be like the house of Pharez” (Ruth 4.12)—the descendants of Zerah are disposed of in three verses. Achan—the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah (Joshua 7.1,18), who troubled Israel, and the wise contemporaries of Solomon, Ethan, Heman, and Chalcol and Darda, sons of Mahol (1 Kings 4.31), with one son of Ethan, Azariah, are the only persons named before the time of Ezra as belonging to the family of Zerah.

Ethan precedes Heman in the genealogy in Chronicles and the reference in Kings. Heman precedes Ethan in the Psalms. And in the Levitical Order, Heman as a Kohathite takes precedence of Ethan, who is a Merarite. This little fact supports the view of the Jewish commentator Kashi, that the Heman and Ethan of these Psalms are really the same Ethan and Heman the Ezrahites who are mentioned in Kings and Chronicles. The Psalter calls them Ezrahites, as do Kings and Chronicles. But it reverses the order of the two names, and gives them, not according to their birth, but according to their Levitical seniority.

I incline to think, therefore, that this is one more instance of persons of the family of Judah becoming Levites by intermarriages between members of the two tribes, as Aaron's wife Elisheba was the sister of Nahshon the Prince of Judah in the wilderness (Exod. 6.23); Mary the mother of our Lord was a kinswoman of Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias and one of the daughters of Aaron; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was a Levite of the family of Judah (Judges 17.7). C.H.W.

BOOK 4: THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

We take the Fourth Book of the Psalter to belong to the latter end of the Babylonian Captivity, when the Restoration was full in view.

The raising up of Zion from its stones and dust is spoken of in Psalm 102 as close at hand. It refers directly to the ruins; and to the restoration, at a "set time," of Zion. But there was not a "set time" until the Prophet Jeremiah had foretold it, and Daniel had understood it (Jer. 25.11,12; Dan.9.2).

Psalm 106.44 is almost a prophecy of mercy in Captivity and Return. "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captive."¹⁷ The Doxology at the close of the Book (Ps.106.47,48) contains a prayer for the gathering of the Captives "from among the nations." The first Psalm of the Fifth Book begins with the answer to this Prayer, and their Return. The form of the prayer is slightly altered from the service which David prepared when he brought up the Ark from Gibeon to Zion (1 Chron.16). In David's dedication God is addressed as the "God of our salvation," a word constantly associated with victory in David's time. The days of Israel's victories were over at the close of the Exile, but the Lord did not change. Even in defeat and exile, He was still their God. But now the keynote of the prayer is changed. "Gather us from among the nations." For Israel and Judah had alike been taken into Captivity, and "divided among the nations, and scattered in the lands."

We find another suggestion of Captivity in the fact that this is the only one of the Five Books of the Psalter which does not contain any inscription to "the Chief Musician," any "Selahs" or "Maschils." There is not anything to prove that the Psalms were sung by Priests and Levites, though the special commandments with regard to the "Singers" at the restoration does not look as if they were altogether silent in Babylon. But they tell us themselves that they could not sing "the Lord's song in a strange land" (Ps.137).

More than one-third of the Book is made up of earlier songs, as though a partial silence had fallen upon the Singers of Israel. One theme, however, still finds voices old and new, to set it forth in all its fulness, and it makes a most forcible argument for the date of the Book. It is the message that God gave by the Prophet Jeremiah to the Captive Israelites, which they were to deliver to their captors. It is given in Chaldee, that their ignorance of the language might not delay its utterance. "Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens" (Jer.10.11). This message has a splendid expansion in the Fourth Book of the Psalter. "Jehovah reigneth" is to be said among the heathen (Ps.96.10), and told to all people (97.1; 99.1). The might and the majesty of Jehovah: His providential care of His people, and of all created things, are spoken of in many places. Psalms 90.2; 92.5; 93.1; 94.5; 95.4,5; 97.1-5;

¹⁷ Cf. also verse 23, about Moses standing in the gap, with words by Ezekiel, a prophet of the Captivity (Ezekiel 13.5; 22.30).

99.1; 102.25; 103.19; 104 throughout, refer to the Lord as the Creator and Preserver of all things.

The vanity of idols is shown in Psalms 96.5,10; 97.7; 99.8; 106.35-37.

Even Nebuchadnezzar himself proclaims to “all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth” that “. . . the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will . . . All whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Dan. 4.1,17,34,35,37).

In order to realise the purpose of God in sending His own people into Captivity in Babylon, we must consider His plan for the spread of the knowledge of the true God among all mankind. The Kingdom of the Lord over Israel was to be expanded into a Kingdom of the Lord over the whole civilised world. The nations in general were to be brought into distinct relation to the Divine Government.

This truth is presented to us in the Divine license granted to the King of Babylon in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, to rule all nations.

God commanded Jeremiah to send bonds and yokes which he had first worn upon his own neck to the Kings of Edom and Moab; the King of the Ammonites; and the Kings of Tyros and Zidon, with this message, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand” (Jer. 27.1,11).

This sovereignty was proclaimed through Jeremiah at Jerusalem, and through Daniel at Babylon at very nearly the same time—scarcely a year’s interval separated the two proclamations. Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, in giving the interpretation of his dream, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold” (Dan.2.37,38).¹⁸

But Nebuchadnezzar had also to learn by a personal and painful experience that he held his kingdom under the “High God,” the “King of heaven, who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ” (see Dan 4).

The Fourth Book of the Psalter is quite in accordance with this state of things. The five Psalms from 96 to 100 inclusive, dwell upon the salvation that is now offered to all people, whether Jew or Gentile; and upon the righteousness and equity of the King who would reign

¹⁸ This universal dominion was given to Cyrus after the downfall of Babylon (Ezra 1.2; 2 Chron. 36.23).

over them. We learn that God's purpose in calling out the chosen people was, that they might be the leaven to each of the great world empires in turn. Long before this time God gave Moses the song in which these words occur: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. 32.8), or, as St. Paul interpreted it to the men of Athens, "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of; the earth, and hath determined the times before , appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord if haply they j might feel after him and find him " (Acts 17.26,27).

The opportunity for Babylon was when Nebuchadnezzar carried away to his own capital the; best of the Tribes of Israel, who had God's law and the writings of the Prophets. During | twenty years of his reign, he had for his prime í minister the Prophet Daniel, who secured, with the aid of his three friends, the necessary distinction between Jew and Gentile (Dan. 1 and 3). Before the captivity of Jehoiachin and of the "good figs" (Jer. 24.5), these men had gained two absolutely indispensable privileges for the Captives. The first was the right to abstain from food forbidden by the Law of Moses.

Daniel and his friends obtained this privilege; during their training under Melzar, as recorded, in Dan. 1. It is not likely that they were; deprived of it when the whole province of Babylon came under their charge. The second privilege was secured by the bold stand of Daniel's three friends against idolatry in the presence of the great image of gold (Dan. 3). The right of the Jews to serve and worship only their own God, was vindicated throughout the Chaldean empire before the "good figs" were brought into the land "for their good" (Jer.24.5).

The story of Daniel recalls that of Joseph (see Ps.105). As Joseph was the man sent before Israel into Egypt, so Daniel was the man sent before them into Babylon in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar; and Daniel lived throughout the Captivity (Dan.10.1).

He was ruler of the whole province of Babylon, with his friends under him, four years before the captivity of Jeconiah and Ezekiel. So that "the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive" on their arrival at Babylon found themselves in charge of faithful members of their own royal family—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

The effect of this must have been felt in countless ways. Most of all, it must have saved the Jews from being forced into idolatry, or any such abandonment of their national customs as would have broken their allegiance to the Law of Moses. They were in captivity as a punishment for disobedience to that law. But captivity would be no remedy if it made obedience impossible.

The destruction of the Temple and altar would of itself suspend the greater part of their ritual and ceremonial for the time. But the personal religion commanded by the Law of Moses is not affected by these things. The word of God and prayer and exhortation do not require either Temple or altar. The two great commandments of the law are the same whether there is "a place" "which the Lord has chosen to cause his name to dwell there," or not. The desolation of "the place" at once distinguishes the permanent and weightier matters of the law from mere external observances which have no necessary connection with the soul of true religion. From this point of view we may see the immense importance of the questions settled for Daniel and his friends before the Captivity of the nation.

God also sent Ezekiel the Prophet to the captives by the river of Chebar, more especially to the captives of Jeconiah's Captivity, who formed the "remnant" that was to be chastened and prepared in exile for the Return.

Ezekiel's place among the captives was quite distinct from that of Daniel, but it was not less important in its way. He was a Priest as well as a Prophet, and it was his duty to instruct the captives in that religion of which the free exercise was secured for them by Daniel and his friends. The captives are described to Ezekiel as "impudent children and stiff-hearted," and Ezekiel's business was to convince them that, "Thus saith the Lord God":—that is, that the Lord Himself had spoken to them, and given them His law. Their own sins and the sins of their fathers were laid before them in the most vivid manner possible, together with the commands of God given to them. Before these captives was laid open the secret idolatry of Jerusalem as it presented itself to the sight of Almighty God, and His way of dealing with it. The chastened captives were shown the iniquities and punishments of those whom they had left in Jerusalem, that they might be themselves moved to repentance.

Signs, judgments, lamentations, pictures in word, and pictures in the actions of the Prophet himself, were employed to work upon the minds of these men. By all this, and by their own constant experience of life in captivity, they were stirred up to realise their true position as the Israel of God, in the midst of the Gentile world. God had told Jeremiah that He would give them a heart to know that He was the Lord, and He promised that they should return to Him with their whole heart (Jer.24.7). The result to the Jews was to banish idolatry for evermore, and to teach them their dependence on Jehovah their God. The Psalms of the Fourth Book illustrate this state of things, and bring back to their minds the "old paths" in which Jeremiah exhorted them to walk (Jer.6.16).

We have no hint in the Psalter that it contains a reproduction of the service which David wrote to celebrate his bringing the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron.6), yet it reappears in the Fourth Book in three parts, Ps. 105.1-15; Ps. 96; and Ps. 106.1, and 47, 48. But almost all the Psalms in this Book are exhibited as anonymous, even when we know from other places who wrote them.¹⁹ To the time of the promised restoration of the Temple they are most appropriate. After the wilderness Psalm by Moses (90), and the ninety-first, which is probably a companion Psalm of the same date, we have "a Psalm for the Sabbath Day" (Psa.92). The pollution of the Sabbath was one of the sins that had brought the people into captivity. (See Ezek. 20.12,13,14,20,21,24; 22.8,26; also 44.24.) "They shall hallow my Sabbaths" is a charge laid upon the priests of Ezekiel's time.²⁰ After the Return, the observance of the Sabbath was enforced by the Governor (Neh.10.31; 13.15-22).

It is difficult to read Psalm 94 without comparing it with Daniel 6, when "mischief was framed by a law" to "condemn the innocent blood," but it returned upon those who framed it. That the ninety-fifth Psalm is by David we learn in Heb. 4.7.

Is it possible that it was written to urge the people to bring up the Ark to Zion? They might have been discouraged by the death of Uzza, which caused even David to be afraid of God. But the teaching of the Psalm goes on from age to age, as we learn in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

¹⁹ This keeps up an analogy with the Fourth Period of the Exodus, when we have the long wandering of nearly thirty-eight years represented by a list of places in Num. 33, most of them unidentified to the present day.

²⁰ Cf. Ezek. 46.1, 3-12.

It is easy to see the fitness of the following Psalm to the period. Psalm 101 has the application emphasised to the near prospect of building the second Temple, if we remember the teaching which the captives had received from the Prophet Ezekiel on the character of those who should come to worship Jehovah. (See Ezek. 43 and 44 passim, especially chap. 43.7,8.) “The place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile. . . In their setting of their threshold, by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, for there was but a wall between me and them; they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.”

Can we venture to suggest that the captive King, Jehoiachin, may be the writer of the Psalm inscribed “A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before the Lord ”? In verse 10 he says, “Thou hast taken me up and cast me down”: so that he had once held an exalted station, though he had been afterwards deprived of it.

The hundred and fourth Psalm is the full expansion of the message which God sent to the heathen by their Captives in Babylon—“The Lord is the true God, he is the living God and an everlasting King. . . . He hath made the earth by his power: he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion ... he is the former of all things . . . the Lord of hosts is his name” (Jer.10.10-16).

God is named Jehovah almost entirely in this Book.

Those who clung to the true God in these dark days held to the Covenant name. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” “Jehovah reigneth” is the keynote of the Book, as opposed to the despotism of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. There was no longer on earth a “Place ” where God specially revealed Himself, yet He was their covenant God in “all places whither they went.” Outward things might be dark, but He “giveth songs in the night” (Job 35.10), and the “new song”—now first added to the ninety-sixth Psalm—is sung in the New Testament, firstly at the Ascension of Christ, and His taking the Book of Redemption to open (Rev. 5.9); and secondly, at the revelation of the Lamb on Mount Zion, in the face of the Kingdom of the Beast (Rev. 14.3).

It has been too generally taken for granted, in treating the history of the Canon of the Old Testament, that nothing was done in it between the “men of Hezekiah” (Prov. 25.1) and the days of Ezra after the Captivity. But is not this to overlook the purpose of the Captivity, and the whole series of events as set forth by the prophet Malachi —“From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles” (Mal. 1.11)?

But how were the instruments for this great purpose prepared? There is nothing in the mere privation of liberty, or in the removal from one country to another, to alter the whole mind of man, to change idolaters into pure worshippers, or lawless or immoral persons into law-abiding members of a strict and separate sect. Yet this was in fact the result of the Captivity. The exhortations of Ezekiel made it impossible for them to escape from discipline and reproof. From this time we hear no more of idolatry in the Jewish nation.

The first act of their return was to set up God’s altar, and from the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord (Ezra 3.1-6); and in the same chapter we are told that they “kept the feast of tabernacles,” and “offered” the “daily burnt offerings

by number”; and “afterwards the continual burnt offerings both of the new moon, and of all the set feasts of the Lord.”

Again there was no sort of doubt or hesitation as to their reply to the invitation of the Samaritans to let them build with the Jews, and form one community. “Ye have nothing to do with us.” Why not? The law furnishes the only possible reply! But this precise application of the law to the daily practice of the returned captives is not traceable to anything but what had been learned during the time of the Captivity! From whom did they learn? What Books were in use? Who superintended the instruction given?

In answer to these questions we have only to study the Prophets of the Captivity, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, to find the information that we desire; and the whole structure of the Fourth Book of the Psalter accords with the same circumstances.

That the Captives had the Law of Moses is evident from Ezekiel’s comments upon it. There are about ninety cases in which the expressions of the central portion of Leviticus, which did not depend upon ritual, are found in Ezekiel also; and at least twenty of these phrases are not found elsewhere.²¹ Then there is the knowledge of the details which is shown at the Return; and the Jewish peculiarities even of those who remained in the Persian dominions attracted notice all over the Persian world, as Haman bears witness. “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws” (Esther 3.8).

We know that Daniel had the writings of Jeremiah (Dan. 9.2), by which he discovered the duration of the Captivity; and the Fourth Book of the Psalter contains several Psalms which must have been in the keeping of the Priests and Levites, who were in charge of the sacred Books. (See Deut. 31.9,26; 1 Chron. 16.7.) Thus Psalm 90, “a prayer of Moses the man of God,” and probably 91, 95 (Heb. 4.7), 96, 101, 103, 105.1-15, 106.1,47,48, were almost certainly in their care: cf. also Ps. 104.20—end, with Jer. 10.1-16.

“The dates of the Captivities in Daniel 1. and in the supplement to Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer.52), are Babylonian reckoning, and Daniel’s official position would make them matters within his reach. Ezekiel was contemporary with Daniel in Babylon for some twenty-seven years. Apparently a great deal must have been done by these ‘two witnesses’ during the Captivity for the Canon of Scripture; and the scrupulous observance of the law in many particulars by the returning captives supports this belief.”— [C.H.W.] The “good figs” had indeed been brought into Babylon “for their good” (Jer24.5; compare Ezek. 20.34-44).

It is significant that the double “Amen” at the close of the first three Books of the Psalter gives place in the Fourth Book to “Amen, Hallelujah.” “For what” ‘Amen’ is to a promise in the language of faith and hope, that ‘Hallelujah’ is to the fulfilment of the promise in the language of thanksgiving.”²² So that we almost hear the answer to the closing words, “Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen,” in the proclamation of Cyrus: “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1.2,3; see Ps.

²¹ *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, New York.

²² “*When ye Pray*,” by the Rev. C. H. Waller, D.D.

107.2,3).

We have then in the Fourth Book of the Psalms the hymn book of “Captivity and Return.”

No great Psalmist’s name is associated with this period; but the sacred hymns of the past could be adapted and arranged, and they proved marvellously appropriate to the need. We have also some nine or ten Psalms, or portion of Psalms, without a name, which take up the same theme.

They are not only personal expressions of the longings and aspirations of the Captives—of their faith in God, and the realisation of His promises. They are also Missionary hymns. Israel was sent into Captivity not only for his own chastisement, but to carry a message to the nations. That message is embodied in these Psalms. “The Lord reigneth” is the keynote of the Book; not a defiance of their captors, but a message from the King that while they had time they should acknowledge Him, and submit themselves to His rule. We may compare it to the everlasting Gospel with which an angel did fly in the midst of heaven, “to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev.14.6,7).

BOOK 5 – Part I: THE RETURN, AND THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

The Fifth Book of the Psalter gives the consummation of the whole. To interpret its application fully is beyond our power, for it takes us into the region of unfulfilled prophecy.

There are, however, certain points about it which can easily be noted.

It may be looked upon as the joint work of Judah and Levi. In the First Book David’s work predominates. In the Second Book that of the Levites. The Third Book is almost entirely Levitical. The Fourth Book has no names of authors but Moses and David. The Fifth Book has only the names of David and Solomon. Yet the longest Psalm in the Fifth Book is probably due to Ezra the Priest, “the Scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven.” Not one of the five Books lacks the name of David, “the sweet Psalmist of Israel,” as an author. The proportion of Levitical and Davidic work is well worth noticing in any analysis of the whole.

In the Fifth Book we see our Lord uniting the two offices of Priest and King (Ps. 110), as the Prophet Zechariah described Him later on: “Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne” (Zech. 6.13).

“The Fifth Book of the Psalter is the most finished of all the five in its arrangement.

“Two Elements are noticeable—one Historic, the other Prophetic. The period of history to which it belongs is manifestly the Return from Captivity.

“The three most obvious historical points of contact are:—

“(1) The Return of the Captives asked for in the closing Doxology of Book 4, ‘Gather us from among the nations’ (cvi. 47); and ‘granted’ and acknowledged in the first Psalm of Book 5, 107.3, ‘Let them give thanks whom the Lord hath gathered.’

“(2) The re-establishment of the Law in Israel in all its glory (Ps.119), from the first letter of its alphabet to the last.

“(3) The reminiscences of Babylon, conjoined with some of David’s experiences of trouble before he came to the throne. Psalms 137 to 143, and especially 142.

“Other details may be brought into line with these; but no history short of the whole experience of Israel will suffice to explain the entire Book. Consequently from the period of its authorship, the view must be partly prophetic and partly retrospective.” C. H. W.

We deal separately with these two aspects.

The older Psalms that are incorporated with it help out its purpose in a wonderful way; and the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the latter part of Daniel, and the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi give us the History of the time; also the Book of Esther falls into a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra.

We may now examine the historical details of the Return, and see where they throw light upon the Fifth Book of the Psalter, or were themselves lit up by it.

The rebuilding of the Temple was not accomplished all at once. In the first year of his reign Cyrus, King of Persia, granted permission to the Captives to return to their own land, and to build the house of God. He also restored to Zerubbabel the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple at Jerusalem.

The altar was then set up, and the foundation of the house was laid. (See Ezra 1, 2, 3.) But opposition on the part of the Samaritan colony arose almost immediately, the Jews refusing to admit the strangers to fellowship with them. We must remember that the Samaritan colonists were not Israelites, but absolute foreigners. (See 2 Kings 17.23; Ezra 4.9,10.)

Even in the days of Cyrus the work of restoring the Temple almost ceased (Ezra 4.5).²³ The opposition continued from the reign of Cyrus into that of Darius, when the Temple was again commenced and energetically finished. Nothing is said in Scripture of the intervening Kings, Cambyses, and Smerdis the impostor. Ezra 5 is a summary of the opposition from the days of Cyrus to Darius, when the Temple was successfully accomplished. But from that point Ezra continues the record of Samaritan opposition into the subsequent reigns, and finishes it, deferring the completion of the Temple until he has disposed of this topic. The paragraph marked at Ezra 4.7 should end with verse 23. The twenty-fourth verse might begin “Thus,” or “In this way ceased,” i.e. owing to the opposition of the Samaritans.

Ezra was not present when the building of the Temple ceased. It went on again, and was completed before he came. But he had a vivid recollection of the way in which the building

²³ Cf. Dan. 10.1-3. Hence, in all probability, Daniel’s mourning and distress as there related. He had remained in Babylon, where he helped the returning Exiles by his influence and his prayers. We last hear of him at this time in the vision granted to him of Israel’s future (Dan. 10.-12), extending from that date to the time of “the end.” C. H. W.

of the wall was stopped in his time “by force and power.” So he tells the story which he had only heard; being minded to set forth once for all what Samaritan spite was capable of in a moment of opportunity. Thus the mention of the reigns of Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes in Ezra 4.6 and 7-23 is parenthetical, and should be reserved to the end of the book if taken in chronological order. The narrative is consecutive if you pass from verse 5 to verse 24.

The Samaritan opposition led to a culpable slackness on the part of the Jews themselves. For this they are rebuked by the Prophet Haggai (Haggai 1.4,8). He and Zechariah, in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, stirred up the people with such energy that they set to work again, and the Temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius as described by Ezra, chapters 5, 6. The whole of Haggai and the Book of Zechariah to the close of chapter 8. illustrate this portion of Jewish history.

The next portion will be found in the Book of Esther, which belongs to the reign of Xerxes, and occupies historically a position between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra. The first six chapters of Ezra contain the record of times before he was himself a member of the restored people, except the parenthetical passage in chapter 4, which belongs to his own time, and is brought in by way of illustration where it is. The story of Esther does not strictly belong to the Return from the Captivity, though it supplies a most interesting historical illustration of it. There is a long interval of about fifty- seven years²⁴ between the account of the Passover in Ezra 6 and the seventh year of Artaxerxes, when Ezra the Scribe was sent from Babylon with a large company of Captives to Jerusalem. It is not a great stretch of imagination to suppose that the education of Ezra in the law of Moses was due to Esther and Mordecai.

The work of Ezra under the authority of Artaxerxes is fully described by himself in the four last chapters of his book. To beautify the Temple: to recruit the forces of the restored provinces by a further contingent;²⁵ to set up magistrates and judges through the whole of Judaea and Galilee: to enact the Jewish law as part of the King’s law in that district (Ezra 7.26), and, in the execution of this task, to run the greatest danger of all in compelling the people of Israel to divorce their idolatrous wives: this was the burden of Ezra. How great a responsibility it entailed requires some thought and imagination to realise. The attempt on the part of Ezra’s colony to build the wall of Jerusalem followed. The whole Samaritan colony was immediately up in arms. It was found impossible to keep the peace of Jerusalem without walls, gates, and bars. No permission had, however, been given to Ezra by Artaxerxes to fortify the city, consequently the enemies of the Jews had an ostensible ground of complaint. Now comes in their letter recorded in Ezra iv. All the nations join with one accord, being all alike offended by the action of the Jewish authorities in regard, to their women. Artaxerxes at once takes alarm, and writes an order to stop the fortification of Jerusalem until permission is given. On receipt of this reply, the enemies of the Jews promptly act upon it, and use violence to stay the proceedings at Jerusalem. This supplies the connecting link between the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Between the coming of Ezra to Jerusalem and the coming of Nehemiah there is a gap of thirteen years. The seventh of Artaxerxes is Ezra’s year: the twentieth is Nehemiah’s.

We come now to the last stage in the restoration of the Jewish polity—the fortification of Jerusalem. This was Nehemiah’s work. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah was in

²⁴ Professor Sayce.

²⁵ Possibly the Priests and Levites for whom he sent may have been, like himself, teachers and scribes. We hear of one “man of understanding,” “by the good hand of God upon us” (Ezra 8.18).

favour at Court, when he received intelligence from his brother that things were seriously amiss at Jerusalem. "Great affliction and reproach;" "a mere remnant, or handful of people holding their own in the province. The wall of Jerusalem broken down, and the gates burnt with fire." Tobiah and Sanballat and their friends were answerable for this. They supposed their work had been done pretty thoroughly, when they made the Jews cease from building the walls by the exercise of "force and power." "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned?" they asked, as if they knew the strength of their own fire, and the thorough destruction they had wrought!

Nehemiah knew quite enough of the temper of the Persian sovereigns to perceive the exceeding peril of meddling with the matter; yet he knew the duty that was before him. He prayed to the God of heaven, and then begged leave to visit the city of his fathers sepulchres, that he might build it. He asked nothing for the living only permission to guard the ashes of the noble dead from dishonour and impious intrusion. The appeal told! He had leave to go, but how long will the journey be, and when wilt thou return? A time was appointed, and he took a Persian guard with him to aid his movement and to be witnesses of his integrity. The wall was built at once, with the utmost diligence; and before any of the enemies of Israel had time to prevent it, or misrepresent Nehemiah's action at Court, the thing was done. His next step was in all probability to return to Court, and get himself appointed Governor of the province for twelve years. Of his administration we have but little detail. We know that it was at his own expense. He took no official salary from the people; he organised and protected them to the utmost of his power; he drew forth Ezra the Scribe from his position of disgraced retirement, and set him in his place as teacher and interpreter of the law; he kept down the foreign influences which Ezra had found too strong for his delegated powers.

At the end of twelve years Nehemiah again returned to the Persian Court, and afterwards obtained a fresh appointment as Governor of Jerusalem. In the Book of Nehemiah there should be a distinct break at the end of chapter 13.3. What precedes this belongs to Nehemiah's first term of office: what follows relates to Tobiah's misconduct in his absence, and the decisive measures taken by Nehemiah on his return. Last of all, we have the prophecy of Malachi, which is most probably contemporary with Nehemiah's second governorship.

The first part of Malachi contains a rebuke to the priests for delinquencies similar to what we read of in Neh. 13. The state of things described by the two writers is the same upon the whole.

A well-known passage in Malachi indicates the Divine purpose in the series of events. "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles."

That the great powers of the Gentile world might receive the Kingdom of Heaven after the manner of leaven, may be said to have been the purpose of the Captivity. The Return was the means of setting Israel as a Church of God among the nations, though no longer as a political power.

It will easily be seen how the several steps and stages of the Return were steps towards the fulfilling of this purpose. First, the Temple of Jerusalem was restored to be a house of prayer and sacrifice for all nations; for kings and all in authority, to pray for the life of the King and of his sons, as Darius and Artaxerxes well understood. Next, the law of Israel was allowed to stand as part of the law of the Persian Empire, in the province where God's Temple was built,

and where His people abode. No enemy was suffered to abolish this law, or interfere with the enforcement of it, within its own appointed sphere, until Christ came. Neither Haman, nor in later times the Grecian power under Antiochus Epiphanes, was suffered to prevent this. And when a certain amount of political support was wanted in order to the full freedom of this law, the required support was fully provided in the Dispensation of Divine Providence. A Nehemiah was not lacking to strengthen the hands of the Ezra of the time. The wall of Jerusalem was built.

“These events occupy a period of not less than a hundred years. The decree of Cyrus for rebuilding the Temple bears date 537 B.C. The second appointment of Nehemiah as Governor (Neh. 13.6), by the same reckoning (Sayce), was 433 B.C.

“But the events of a century can only be viewed as a whole from the close of the century. Consequently the earlier incidents of the period, and the final arrangement of this selection of Psalms must be taken from the end, and not from the beginning of the century.” C. H. W.

The Fifth Book of the Psalter seems to fit into the work of both Ezra and Nehemiah, though the larger proportion of it probably appeared early in the period, before either of them came from Babylon. The broken gates of brass, the silence of the Lord’s song, the sorrows of Captivity, the joys of release, found expression perhaps at once in Psalms 107, 126, 137. Psalms 108, 109—both by David—would naturally come forth before the Temple was built, as they describe the clearing away of iniquity. Psalm 108 combines two portions of Psalms from Book 2—one of David’s in the cave when he fled from Saul (Ps. 57.7-11), and one when he was at war with the Gentiles (Psalm 60.5-12). The first shows him in danger from his own people, the second when he is in peril among the Gentiles. The joint Psalm commemorates his deliverance from both alike.

Psalm 109 is also by David, and it refers to many different forms of enmity to God and to His people. In the Fifth Book it has later on a reference to Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite, of whom Nehemiah says in the words of this Psalm, “Cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders” (Neh.4.5).

Psalm 110, also by David, is perhaps alluded to by Zech. 6.13, and if so, it would be known before the coming of Ezra. It affords one of the strongest proofs in the whole of the Psalter, that prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1.21). We fail to find in the life of David any historical background for the thoughts, which indeed we are told that David uttered “in Spirit” (Matt. 22.43, 44), about his Lord. The Psalm implies our Lord’s Resurrection, Ascension, Sitting at the right hand of God, His many willing followers, His victory over all enemies, His Kingly priesthood “after the order of Melchizedek,” who refreshed and blessed Abraham after his victory (Gen.14.18-20). In the Fifth Book of the Psalter it has a most encouraging place.

Psalm 136 was probably sung when the foundation of the Temple was laid, as it contains some of the very words used. Compare Ezra 3.10,11, “And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel.”

This is the fulfilment of the Prophecy in Jeremiah 33, where the Lord promised that He would cause the Captivity of Judah and Israel to return, and would cleanse and pardon them. “And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an ‘honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it. Thus saith the Lord, Again there shall be heard in this place . . . the voice of joy . . . the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of Hosts: for the Lord is good: for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord ” (Jer.33.9-16).

This is a part of His plan by which His “Name shall be great among the heathen” (Mal.1.11), even the goodness that He shows “towards Israel.”

We have not seen the last two words joined to the Song before. It cannot be accidental that this is the last mention of the Song in sacred history. We have only the remainder of Psalm 136 to consider after this, and it was probably sung at the same time.

THE HALLEL

The six Psalms which were sung at the great Jewish festivals (113-118) may have been used at the Dedication of the Second Temple; but we do not know the date of the selection, except that a Jewish tradition connects Psalm 118 with this time;²⁶ and Ps. 116 is ascribed to King Hezekiah, who uses many of the words found in it.²⁷

Psalm 119 is very generally attributed to Ezra the Scribe, who “had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7.10). Artaxerxes authorised Ezra to teach “the Wisdom of God that is in thine hand to those that know not this law” (Ezra 7.25). But in the execution of this order he stirred up the enmity of the Samaritan colony (as we have seen, page 86), and he seems to have been in retirement for thirteen years until Nehemiah brought him forward again, as teacher and interpreter of the Law (Neh. 8.1). He may have written Psalm 119 during these years, for some verses speak of unfair dealing and oppression, on the part of his “adversaries,” “Princes,” “Kings,” “False accusers,” “Persecutors.” He longs for God’s quickening Spirit and “comfort in affliction.” But “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” is his strong support. Ezra tells of his own grief and shame when he found that the “holy seed” had mingled themselves with the people of the land (Ezra 9.2-6; 10.6), and in the Psalm we have “Rivers of water run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law,” and “I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy law” (Psalm 119.136,158).

Psalm 130 may perhaps have been uttered under similar circumstances.

After the Return from the Captivity, great trouble seems to have been taken to renew the Psalmody in all its beauty. Special mention is made of the Singers in Ezra 3.10,11, when the foundations of the house were laid. Artaxerxes —probably inspired by his councillor Pethahiah,²⁸ a man of the tribe of Judah—orders a daily portion to be given to them

²⁶ Cf. verse 22, about the “stone which the builders rejected,” with Zech. 4.7, “He shall bring forth the head-stone with shoutings.”

²⁷ Dr. Kay on the Psalms.

²⁸ Professor Sayce.

(Neh.11.23,24).

“And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers . . . every day his portion” (Neh.12.47).

The ordinances of David and of Asaph were recalled with regard to Psalmody (Ezra 3.10; Neh. 12.24, 36). Fifteen Psalms with David’s name, and one with that of Solomon were brought forth. Some of these were evidently written for the bringing up of the Ark by David to Jerusalem, and they are therefore entirely suitable to the rebuilding of the Temple.²⁹

The message which God sent to the Chaldeans through Jeremiah (Jer.10.11) is very much in evidence after the return of the Captives. Five times over in the Fifth Book, God is called the “Maker of heaven and earth,”³⁰ and the Levites, before the sealing of the Covenant, confess His name in these words, “Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, and all things that are therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Neh.9.6).

We cannot locate exactly a pair of very remarkable Psalms in the Fifth Book, and we do not know who wrote them. They are acrostic and alphabetical. One is in praise of the Creator, the other of the man that feareth the Lord. Each Psalm has ten verses besides the opening Hallelujah: eight of these verses are in two parts; and each part begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet (in order). The ninth and tenth verses are in three parts, and use up the remaining letters. In both Psalms alike we find the phrases, “He is gracious and full of compassion,” and “His righteousness endureth for ever.”

If we examine the Book of Nehemiah closely, we shall find reason to think that he set this model before him for his own conduct. To the poorer Jews who had returned from Babylon it was a very trying time. The pressure of the tribute demanded by the Persian Kings lay heavily upon them. They mortgaged their lands, and sold their children for slaves to the more wealthy Jews; and had no power to redeem them (Neh. 5.1-6). Nehemiah remonstrates with these nobles and rulers who had exacted usury of their distressed brethren, saying, “We after our ability have redeemed our brethren . . . which were sold unto the heathen, and will ye even sell your brethren?” He recounts various particulars, and adds, “So did not I, because of the fear of God.”—“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord”

Then when Nehemiah was in perplexity through the machinations of Sanballat and Tobiah, after he had considered their proposals he says, “Then I perceived that God had not sent, him” (Neh. 6.12).—“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.”

We have already seen some of his compassionate dealings towards his poorer brethren (Neh.5.8-13)—“He is gracious and full of compassion.”

Nehemiah entreats that the Lord will remember the good deeds that he has done for the house of God and for the offices thereof (Neh. 13.14,31, also v.16).—“The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.”

He was certainly not afraid when he was assured that his enemies sought his life. “Should

²⁹ Cf. Ps. 122.3 with 1 Chron. 13.2; Ps. 132 with 2 Chron. 6. 41, 42.

³⁰ Ps. 115.15; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3; 146.6; cf. Neh. 9.6.

such a man as I flee? and who is there that being as I am would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in" (Neh. 6.11) — "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings."

Nehemiah says: "There were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that were round about us (Neh.5.17).—"He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor."

And truly "his horn was exalted with honour" and "the wicked were grieved"—when the wall of Jerusalem was finished in spite of all their opposition, and "they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (Neh. 6.15, 16).

Apparently also "wealth and riches were in his house," as he could live without taking the official salary of the governor, and also deal so liberally with his poorer friends—"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord."

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

Many of the fifteen Songs of Degrees must have been in use long before this time; but they were probably given a place in the Fifth Book for the two great companies that gave thanks at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem when it was finished. One of these companies had the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the Scribe went before them. "They went up by the stairs (ascents) of the City of David at the going up of the wall above the house of David." And Nehemiah was with the other company that gave thanks . . . "and the singers sang loud." Probably the last five Psalms in the Psalter, "the Hallelujah Chorus," were also sung on that occasion, for the singers included the women and children of Psalm 148.12, "Both young men and maidens: old men and children," and they used in their rejoicing the very instruments named in Psalm 150., "both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps" (Neh. 12. 27).

The two companies stood still on the wall at the water gate and the prison gate respectively—"Also that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoicings: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off" (Neh. 12.13).

"Thus with the end of the Fifth Book of the Psalter, with Nehemiah, and with Malachi, we see the close of the Canon of the Old Testament Scripture. Remember ye the Law of Moses my servant which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments. Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.' Thus was Israel left with Moses and the Prophets until the forerunner of the LORD Himself appeared. Not otherwise are we ourselves left with the New Testament Canon closed by St. John, not waiting for Elijah, but for the Lord Himself. 'Surely I come quickly.' 'Till he come' the Scriptures are our only rule." C. H. W.

Note.—The exact situation of the gates mentioned in Nehemiah cannot now be established with certainty. But the water gate and the prison gate are identified in the latest excavations at Jerusalem with more evidence in their favour than most of the others. Dr. Bliss says: "The water gate was approached from the south as the company reached it by way of the fountain gate and the stairs. From Neh.3.15, we find that the Pool of Siloam lay between those, two places. The water gate thus was one of the southern entrances to the Temple, and the prison

gate one of the northern.

“Being opposite the fountain gate, they ascended the Eastern Hill near its southern termination to the City of David—in other words, to that part of larger Jerusalem which, under the name of Zion, was (once) the stronghold of the Jebusites, and was wrested from them by David, who called it after himself. Though Jerusalem in later times, spread far beyond these limits, the name, City of David, still clung to the spot, gradually including the whole Eastern Hill, but never referring to the Western. ‘Zion’ is used later poetically for all Jerusalem, and in Christian times even transferred to the southern part of the Western Hill.”—“Excavations at Jerusalem, 1894-1897,” by F. J. Bliss, Ph.D.

NOTE BY DR. WALLER

We append a list of the Persian monarchs who rendered assistance in the restoration of the people of Israel:

1. Darius the Mede. Daniel’s patron (Dan. 6.25-28).
2. Cyrus the Persian, who decreed the restoration of the Temple, 537 B.C.

Cambyses, 529 B.C.; Pseudo-Smerdis, 521 B.C., not named, but alluded to in Dan. 11.3.
3. Darius, son of Hystaspes, 521-485 B.C., who decreed the completion of the Temple.
4. Xerxes, 485-466 B.C., who supported Esther and Mordecai against Haman.
5. Artaxerxes Longimanus, 465-425 B.C., who most effectually supported Ezra and Nehemiah.

Thus the re-establishment of the Jewish commonwealth, including the Temple, the law, and the worship at Jerusalem, is seen to be the work of not less than an entire century. Beginning with Zerubbabel under Cyrus, and ending with Nehemiah under Artaxerxes, it passes through a period of depression between.

That this is the general order of thought in the Fifth Book of the Psalter is obvious. Beginning and ending with the note of praise for deliverance, it exhibits distinct marks of conflict on the way. The Book is not a diary, but a retrospect of deliverance through conflict, viewed from the conflict’s triumphant close.

BOOK 5 – Part II: THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

*“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard
Neither have entered into the heart of man,
The things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit:
For the Spirit searcheth all things,
Yea the deep things of God.”*

The General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn.

“πανηγύρις και εκκλησία. In the last ‘there lay ever the sense of an assembly coming together for the transaction of business.’ The first ‘was a solemn assembly for purposes of festal rejoicing:’ ... ‘If we keep this festal character of the πανηγύρις in mind, we shall find a peculiar fitness in the employment of this word in Heb. 12.23, where only in the N.T. it occurs. The Apostle is there setting forth the Communion of the Church militant on earth with the Church triumphant in heaven—of the Church toiling and suffering here with that Church from which all weariness and toil have for ever passed away (Rev. 21.4); and how could he better describe this last than as a πανήγυρις than as the glad and festal assembly of heaven?”—*“Synonyms of the New Testament”* by Archbishop Trench.

We might look at all the Books of the Psalter in their prophetic aspect, guided by the quotations made from them in the New Testament; setting forth our Lord’s sufferings, and the “glory that should follow”: the kingdom that should be established in righteousness: and the dominion over all the earth. But we must leave that study for the present.

The Fifth Book, however, gives such wonderful hints and outlines of the employments and pursuits of the Redeemed that we cannot refrain from dwelling on some of them. It is not so much the verses quoted in the New Testament, as the subjects and the sequence of the Psalms themselves that are so suggestive.

“The only analysis that accounts for the whole of this Book is that which regards it as a picture of the gathering together of all whom the Lord hath redeemed, unto the coronation of the Messiah.

From this point of view we have a complete scheme, thus—

Ps.107 The gathering together of the redeemed, again redeemed from the hand of the enemy.

Ps.108 Our hearts fixed on Him as ruler over Israel, and Conqueror of Edom.

Ps.109 His foes and betrayers made sons of perdition.

Ps.110 Himself at God’s right hand, a Priest upon His throne, and His foes His footstool.

Ps.111, 112 Exhibit the perfecting of man’s character ‘after our likeness,’ for his destiny ‘to have dominion.’

“The next group of Psalms, 113 to 118, explains in the language of prophecy how this result has been achieved. It is the Hallel or ‘Hymn’ of our Lord’s Passion, from His humiliation (Ps. 113) and ‘exodus’ (114) and submission—(‘Not my will, but thine’)—(115) until through love and trust (116) He overcame, and brought mercy to Jews and Gentiles (117), and though rejected by the builders, was made Head of the corner (118).

“The establishment of the law which He obeyed on this basis follows (Ps.119) a complete eightfold Alphabetical Psalm.

“The next group, Songs of Degrees (120–134), displays the ladder by which all the families of the earth go up to receive the blessing promised to them through the Seed of Abraham. It brings before us David’s scheme of the Temple, the restored Tabernacle of David, the house built by Solomon, and the true Temple ‘heard of at Ephratah,’ and the bond of union for all nations.

“This is illustrated by Zech 14, a reminiscence of Jeremiah. But the Captivity of Zion and of David’s Tabernacle is turned.

“Psalms 135 and 136 combine Jeremiah’s praise in Captivity (Jer. 10.13; Ps. 135.7) with the restored song of Zion when Captivity is past.

“Some reminiscences and past experiences of sorrow turned into joy make the next group, 137, 144. The ‘misery’ that cannot be forgotten, is ‘remembered’ as the ‘waters that pass away,’ and leave fertility instead of flood and desolation behind.

“David’s Psalm (Tehillah = Praise) makes a fitting finale to the group, and introduces the fivefold Hallelujah, 126-150, with which the Book comes to its close.”—C. H. W.

After this general analysis we return to the opening Psalm (Ps.107) which strikes the keynote, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south”! It is the gathering together of the Lord’s Redeemed in answer to the closing petition of the Fourth Book; our “gathering together unto Him” (cf. 2 Thess.2.1).

It is long since our Saviour said, “Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” But they cannot all be together until He comes again to receive them unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. It is this gathering together that is foreshadowed in the Fifth Book of the Psalter, as we may see from the way that our Lord quotes Ps. 107.3 in the account of the healing of the centurion’s servant in Matt. 8.11, and again in Luke 13.29 after the parables about the Kingdom of God. “They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.”

This we think gives us the key to the use we may make of this Book. For the words go far beyond any earthly deliverance however wonderful. “The words of Psalm 107, if they carry their full meaning, can be sung only to notes of heavenly music, struck from the harps of God. When our minds begin to enter into them, we think of the ‘sea of glass,’ and the rejoicing multitude that will assemble there. The congregation grows and extends itself, until it is the ‘multitude that no man can number.’ The voice is ‘as the voice of many waters,’ and as ‘the voice of a great thunder,’ and it is that ‘new song’ that no man can learn except those whom the Lord hath redeemed out of the present evil world.

“The Psalm has a sound of Home about it. It looks forward to that last and greatest gathering when all the many sons of God shall have been brought to glory, and there shall be no places empty in the family circle in our Father’s house. Then shall the Lord indeed be praised for His mercy. Then will the Redeemed indeed have the power to see and know the ‘wonders that he doeth for the children of men’—and then, as they look forward to the Eternity before

them, what a force there will be in the well-known call to praise, ‘O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever’”³¹

PSALMS 108 & 109

The next two Psalms, 108, 109, show us the further development of the “time of harvest,” when “the Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” (Matt. 13.30-43). This was what King Solomon—instructed by David—did before he built the earthly Temple. Nehemiah also adopts the language of Psalm 109 when he was about to rebuild the Temple, and to restore the worship of God after the Captivity (Neh. 4.4,5); and in the Book of Revelation we have the destruction of Babylon before the manifestation of the heavenly City, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 17, 21).

Psalm 109, “For him that overcometh,” seems to gather up in itself allusions to many different enemies of God’s people, in many different periods. The punishment of Cain as a “vagabond” recurs to our minds in reading ver. 10, as well as the “Roaring Lion walking about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5.3). Many of the words spoken by the “lying tongue” were directed against David himself. Verses 14 and 15 are applied by Nehemiah to Sanballat and Tobiah for their mocking of the builders of Jerusalem (Neh.4.5). Long afterwards our Lord applies ver. 3 to Himself, “They hated me without a cause” (John 15.25).³² The apostles applied other verses to Judas Iscariot when they had assembled to choose another to “take his office” (Acts 1.20). But all sin seems gathered up in the use of the words “reward of mine adversaries” (ver. 26) by St. Paul, when he says, “The wages of sin is death ” (Rom. 6.23), thus including all kinds of transgression. For of the New Jerusalem we read, “And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21.27).

PSALM 110

Psalm 110 shows our Lord as a Priest upon His Throne, after the Victory and the purging away of sin of Psalms 108, 109.

He is here the Son of God in heaven: the King of righteousness and peace on earth: the Ruler in Zion: the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek came to meet Abraham after his victory over the confederate kings; and he brought forth bread and wine to Abraham, and gave him the blessing of “the Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and earth”! Did not our Lord, too, speak of a time when He should “gird Himself and make His servants sit down to meat, and should come forth and serve them”? (Luke 12.27).

Psalm 110 unites the promises of Ps.2 and Ps.8, and fulfils them to the utmost bounds. The Prophet Zechariah tells us that “He shall build the Temple of the Lord” (Zech. 6.12). And St. Paul also tells us many things in the Epistle to the Hebrews about this Mediator of the “new

³¹ “*The Silver Sockets,*” by Dr. C. H. Waller.

³² See also ver. 25, with Ps22.6,7; Matt, 27.39.

and better covenant,” who “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Heb.7.25).

PSALMS 111 & 112.

“Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Perhaps the most remarkable teaching in the Fifth Book of the Psalter is that of Psalms 111 and 112. They are acrostic and alphabetical, and thus form a pair. The one sets forth the likeness of the Creator, in which man was to be fashioned, according to the decree in Gen. 1.26, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Psalm 112 shows the work of God completed. Man is made “in His image,” “after His likeness,” and the very same words are used to describe them both! In both Psalms we find the words, “His righteousness endureth for ever”; in both, “He is gracious and full of compassion”! “And we may observe that these words are never applied to man – elsewhere in Holy Scripture.”³³

They form a part of the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus (34.6).

He *had* “counted the cost” when He began to build the Tower—even man—and He was able to finish it as He here shows. This is indeed the wedding garment, made ready for the feast, that those who are bidden may be “presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1.26). “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness” (Ps.17.15).

PSALMS 113-118 (INCLUSIVE).

The next six Psalms form the “Hallel”—the hymn which our Lord sang with His disciples in the “Upper Room” at the last Passover according to the regular course of the service. The only time when it is written that our Lord sang on earth, was at the moment when He was about to go forth to battle with His great enemy, and ours. Have these words of Scripture any bearing upon His sufferings? Was the rehearsal of them likely to strengthen Him, or to confirm His courage in any way, in the prospect of all that He had to undergo?

If we read these Psalms with this thought in our minds we shall indeed marvel at what is unfolded to us. We see here the means by which the wonderful “Likeness” of Psalm 112 was formed; for He “whose glory is above the heavens” humbled Himself and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” that “he might set man with the Princes of his people.” And the “cup which might not pass” (Matt. 26.34) was “the cup of our salvation.” “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps. 116.13, 14).

The “Song of Moses” becomes here also “the Song of the Lamb,” as uttered by our Lord in that upper room: “The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation” (Ps. 118.14), with Exod. 15.2.

Moreover, this Passover hymn opens to our view the great missionary work which lies before the restored “tabernacle of David”: even “that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord” (Acts 15.16,17). “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same,” the Lord’s name is to be praised

³³ Dr. Kay on the Psalms.

(Ps.113.3).

“O praise the Lord all ye nations: praise him all ye people” (Ps.117.1). The receiving back of the Jews will be to the Gentiles “as life from the dead” (Rom.11.15): but it is because the Lord humbled Himself to die! All this is recounted in the New Jerusalem when “there stood a Lamb as it had been slain” to loose the seals of the Book of Redemption, and “ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands” proclaim His praise (Rev. 5.6-14).

PSALM 119

How often Christians long for the assurance that they shall not lose the written word in Heaven! It does not look like losing it to find it magnified and dwelt upon in all its aspects and fulness in this Psalm, which is placed amongst those in use in “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12.23): “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven ” (ver. 89).

It is remarkable how often we find allusions to the written word as treasured in heaven.

Twice in Revelation there is a vision of the “Ark of the Testimony” laid up in heaven (Rev. 11.19; 15.5). Twice when St. John would have worshipped the Angels who showed him things to come, they spoke of themselves as having the “testimony of Jesus,” and being “of them which keep the sayings of this book” (Rev. 19.10; 22.9. Cf. Dan.10.21).

No! there is no danger of our not keeping God’s word written, even in glory. “Once uttered, the very sound of His word cannot perish, it must reverberate throughout the Universe for evermore”!

PSALMS 120-124 (INCLUSIVE)

Fifteen “Songs of Degrees” follow Psalm 119 in order. It is thought that these songs belong first to the family gatherings at the feast of the second tithe in Zion. The ties of earth are not disregarded and dislocated in heaven, as we may see by the order of the twelve tribes when they are sealed in Revelation. “In no single instance has the tie of natural relationship been disregarded here. The children of the same mothers are beautifully united:—

1, Judah and Reuben, the son who took the first place, and the son who was born to it; 2, Gad and Asher, Zilpah’s children; 4, Simeon and Levi, nearest at first, then parted, and now rejoined; 5, Issachar and Zebulun, always next each other from their birth; 6, Joseph and Benjamin, Rachel’s two sons. There only remains one pair, the third, Naphthali and Manasseh. Dan and Ephraim are left out altogether: and these two each leave a brother behind. The two solitary brothers are paired in this list!” “If the final arrangement of the Twelve Tribes bears marks of such loving care and design on God’s part, and harmonises so remarkably with their former history, may we not expect the same love and care and perfect order in the arrangement of all the countless multitude of the Redeemed?”³⁴

But these “Songs of Degrees” also belong to other “up-goings” and “ascents.” They were almost certainly sung by the jubilant procession up the stairs of the city of David, and along the walls of Zion (recorded in Nehemiah 12) at the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem,

³⁴ 1 The “*Names on the Gates of Pearl*,” by Dr. Waller.

when “God had made them rejoice with great joy” (Neh.12.43).

Will they be heard in that City whose walls “shall be called Salvation, and its gates Praise” (Isa. 60. 18). Their position in the Fifth Book of the Psalter leads one to expect it.

PSALM 135

“The fifteen preceding Psalms were songs of up-goings: the present and two following Psalms are sung by those who are supposed to have gone up, and reached Zion, and to stand in the sanctuary there, and to join in a chorus of praise to the Lord.” . . . “The Singers reveal to us a vision of the end, and of the great up-going of the Church glorified, caught up to meet the Lord, who is gone up to the heavenly Zion, to prepare a place for those who will join together in singing an everlasting Hallelujah there.”³⁵ Note the recurring thanksgiving for all the conflicts and sorrows of the way, when they are seen from the end.

PSALM 136

“O give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

Perhaps this Psalm proves to us as much as any in the whole Psalter, that “now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face,” in the subjects for which we “glorify God for his mercy.” We give thanks not only because “he led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever”—but also because He “smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Those who stand upon the sea of glass can sing, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Rev. 15.3).

PSALM 137

Psalm 137 recalls to our minds that it is not only by His mercies that God will reveal Himself to the world. “All nations shall come and worship before him; for his judgments (requirements) are made manifest” (Rev. 15.4). And we know that “the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness” (Isa.10.32).

PSALMS 138–145 (INCLUSIVE).

Here follow eight Psalms of David expressing varied experiences. They begin and end with Praise. Did the Levites keep them to bring them forth after the Captivity was over?

Were they like the prayers “offered up with much incense” during the half-hour’s silence in heaven? (Rev.8.1).

Were they the representative experiences of the many-sided man, recounted as gathering up the trials and deliverances of many of the Lord’s children after they had all reached their

³⁵ Bishop Wordsworth on the Psalms.

Home? We may find in them “a Pilgrim’s Progress” which is well worthy of study. First (Ps.138), A rapid glance at the work to be accomplished. Then (Ps.139), the birth of the “new man” (Ps.140). The conflict with the “old man” (a) in the more open opposition, (Ps.141) (b) In the more subtle temptations, (Ps.142) The fear of death, (Ps.143) The fear of being rejected at the last, (Ps.144) The sight of the fulness of Christ to meet all our needs (Ps.144). The triumphant Praise!

PSALM 138

“Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it”

When God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” He had “counted the cost,” even the life and death of His “only-begotten Son,” Who “gave himself a ransom for us.” But now “having begun a good work in us, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1.6). “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands.”

PSALM 139

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

The subject of Psalm 139 is the Creation of the First and of the “Last Adam.” When our Lord “commended his spirit” into the hands of His Father, He laid down the soul of the first Adam. When He arose again from the “lowest part of the earth”³⁶ it was as a “new man,” the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15.45); the “head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph.1.22,23).

The Psalm describes the gradual growth of this body, which—like the stones of Solomon’s Temple—“was made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building” (1 Kings 6.7). We have here the certainty that “in thy book all my members were written”: and “by the greatness of his power” “not one faileth” (Isa. 40.26).

When those in glory recount these mercies, will they not do as was done of old, “And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses; and they said unto Moses, thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us. We have therefore brought an oblation unto the Lord” (Numb. 31.48,49).

PSALM 140

“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?”

When we consider the place of this Psalm next to one containing the history of the formation

³⁶ Cf. Eph. 4.9, “descended into the lower parts of the earth.”

of the “second Adam,” the “new man,” the redeemed soul, we are reminded of the many difficulties and hindrances, and snares and temptations which surround the children of God all through their earthly pilgrimage.

“In the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans there is a quotation put together from six different passages of the Old Testament to prove the corruption of man. One of them is from Psalm 140.3. It is somewhat remarkable when we look them up in detail, to find that one or two of them are fragments of the prayers of the Psalmist against his foes. ‘Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man, preserve me from the wicked man. They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent; adder’s poison is under their lips.’ But who are the evil man’ and the ‘violent man’? By St. Paul’s application of the words, they are seen to be every man, and therefore amongst others, a man’s own self; he who prays thus prays against himself no less than against his enemies: and who is a Christian man’s worst enemy but himself?”—C.H.W.

It is the Old Testament version of the conflict described in Romans 6 and 7. From within and from without the “enemy comes in like a flood,” but as of old the “Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him” (Isa. 59.19). These deliverances must be recalled and celebrated in the Home above!

PSALM 141

“So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.”

Psalm 141 continues to depict the conflict of the “Second Adam,” but it is now the inner and more persistent forms of sin that are spoken of: sins of the tongue, sins of the heart, and the snares of the tempter.

But the writer had “escaped”—“passed over” (margin) as he requested; and it only remained to tell of his deliverance.

PSALM 142

“Maschil of David; a prayer when he was in the cave.”

“The fear of death is fallen upon me.”

Psalm 142 recalls some of our Lord’s own words about Himself: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26.38); “Now is my soul troubled” (John 12.27); “Jesus was troubled in spirit” (John 12.21). These words are like “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me” (ver. 3). “The sorrows of death compassed him” (Ps. 116.3). We seem to be listening to our Lord’s own experience of the Tomb.

It was (like the grave of Lazarus) a cave, and “a stone lay upon it.” “It was not possible that he should be holden of death” (Acts 2.24), and even here He claims God as His “portion in the land of the living” (ver. 5). But “forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2.14,15). This deliverance must also be set forth in the great assembly “where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither

shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev.21.4).

PSALM 143

“I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul”

Psalms 143 seems to belong to the close of David’s life, when he can recall “the days of old.” “His soul is in darkness; his spirit overwhelmed within him.” His prayer is that God will not “enter into judgment with his servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” He is distressed that God hides His face from him.

Like Christian in the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” when he comes to the river of death, “a great darkness and horror fell upon him, so that he could not see before him.” “Here also he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed both since and before he began to be a pilgrim.”

Some light comes to David, for he says in the last verse, “I am thy servant”; and God does not forsake His servants, as he had reason to know. But it is not until the next Psalm that the method of deliverance is before him in its fulness.

PSALM 144

“Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Out of weakness David is made strong, for he begins, “Blessed be the Lord my strength.” God is to him all that he is not in himself, “my goodness, my fortress, my high tower, and my deliverer: my shield, and he in whom I trust.” All that he needs is provided for him in God; and his words in the Psalm recall many like deliverances given to him in times past. He just touches on them now, in order to give thanks again and again, and to sing a “new song” to his Deliverer. It is the Old Testament version of the right of the “great multitude which no man could number to stand before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” They had “come out of the great tribulation, and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Rev. 7.9,14,15).

PSALM 145

“He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.” David’s thanks and praise culminate in his “Psalm of Praise,” for “the enemy was after that as still as stone, until they were gone over.” The reality of this experience is known in this world to many Christians who—sometimes from physical causes; sometimes perhaps from an imperfect apprehension of God’s plan of Redemption—“write bitter things against themselves.” The final preservation of God’s children appears many times in these Psalms. The life may have seemed like a spark amid an ocean of troubles, yet it is not quenched; like a bird actually in the snare of the fowler, yet “the snare is broken,” and the deliverance comes!

That these experiences and deliverances find a place in the Fifth Book of the Psalter, will surely be a matter of praise to many.

PSALMS 146-150 THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS.

Psalm 146: Praise to Jehovah in His personal relation to man.

Psalm 147: Praise in His rebuilding of Jerusalem (“He hath prepared for them a city”) and gathering in the outcasts.

Psalm 148: Praise from all creation and from “a people near unto him.”

Psalm 149: Praise from the risen saints, who shall judge His people.

Psalm 150: “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.”

PSALM 146

The Hallelujah Chorus begins with praise to Jehovah in His personal relations to the soul of the Psalmist:—To the oppressed:—the Hungry: —the Prisoner:—the Blind:—the Bowed down: —the Righteous:—the Stranger, the Fatherless and the Widow.

He “shall reign for ever” in “Zion unto all generations.”

PSALM 147

The next note of praise is for the building of Jerusalem, and the gathering together the outcasts of Israel. God’s care for the outcast is found all through Scripture. The first time that we hear of the “Angel of the Lord,” He comes to seek Hagar in the wilderness when she fled from the face of her mistress Sarai (Gen. 16.7); and again, when she and Ishmael were cast out from the house of Abraham, the Angel of God called to her out of heaven and told her what to do (Gen. 21.17, 19). It was promised in the last covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, that “If any of them be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee” (Deut. 30.3). He “devises means that his banished be not expelled from him” (2 Sam. 14.14), but called back—from Egypt (Isa. 27.12); and from the four corners of the earth (Isa. 11.12). And others besides must be gathered (Isa. 56.8).³⁷

In Isaiah 16.3,4, Moab is ordered to shelter the outcast and not to betray them.

When we come to the New Testament the teaching is quite as plain. Besides the example of our Lord in seeking the blind man who was cast out by the Pharisees (John 9.34, 35), and His words that “He came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19.10), we have His parables in St. Luke 15 of the Lost Sheep; the Lost Piece of Money; the Prodigal Son; also in Luke 14.21,23, when His guests are fetched from the “streets and lanes of the city” first and then from “the highways and hedges.” And just before the fall of Babylon in Revelation, an

³⁷ See also Ezek. 34 11,12,16; Micah 4.6,7; Zeph. 3.19.

angel flies through heaven to preach the everlasting Gospel “to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people,” if any will be induced to fear God and give glory to Him (Rev.14.6,7).

Verse 4. “He telleth the number of the stars.” (Cf Isa. 40.26; 2 Sam. 17.22, “not one faileth”; Dan. 12.3.)

PSALM 148

*The praise is from all Creation.
First from the heavens: then from the earth.*

We are reminded of the songs of heaven which are heard on earth on Mount Zion in Rev.14.1-5. They are taken up by the Redeemed, the Sealed of God out of all the Tribes of Israel (cf. Isa. 35.10). Songs poured over³⁸ their heads, when “they overtake joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”!

Verse 14. “The children of Israel; a people near unto him.” Israel had once fallen away from his position as “Priest of the Lord.” “Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4.6), but here we see them restored, for God had raised up “an horn of salvation” for them (Luke 1.69), and brought them to be “a people near unto him” (Eph. 2.13), who “declare his name to kings of the earth and all people; princes and all judges of the earth.” (Cf. Isa. 61.6.)

PSALM 149

A Song is called in Scripture “a new Song” when it is sung under fresh circumstances. Perhaps the new circumstances here may refer to the Leader of the Song of Praise. In Ps.22.22—a Psalm which is always applied to Christ —He says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee,” and the words are taken up in Heb. 2.12, “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Now the Kingdom has come. He has gone forth who is “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19.16), and He will beautify the meek with salvation.

Verse 5. “Let them sing aloud ‘above’ their beds.”

This refers to resurrection. What follows is of the time when “judgment shall be given to the saints of the most High,” “and the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” “Know ye not,” says St. Paul, “that we shall judge angels?” “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou has put all things in subjection under his feet” (Ps. 8.6; Dan. 7.22,27; 1 Cor.6.2).

PSALM 150

“Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.” “Hallelujah”

³⁸ Dr. West’s translation.

“The Five Books of the Psalter rise gradually from Amen by itself through Amen coupled with Hallelujah, to Hallelujah alone as here.

“Faith has given place to sight, and promises to accomplished facts; and so we have an anticipation of the time when the ‘great multitude’ shall say, ‘Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth’ (Rev. 19.6).”³⁹

The many notes of Praise in the Fifth Book of the Psalter cannot attain their full measure until we reach the Heavenly Jerusalem. But we have treated the book as a retrospect of the way the Lord led each traveller in the wilderness—our Lord Himself in the Hallel telling of His “temptations”; and the experiences and deliverances of many others are recounted. But there are also many anticipations far above what we can realise here, of the “life for evermore” of the brethren who “dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133), the “pleasures for evermore” of His presence (Ps. 16), when we “awake up after his likeness” in the Heavenly Jerusalem.⁴⁰ “These pleasures” are of a special sort; they are pleasures of speech, of social and familiar intercourse with friends. This word “pleasures” always has to do with conversation in the language of the Old Testament Scriptures; and it points to the endless store of converse and intercourse, when all who are gone over Jordan shall be able to look back together, and to remember all the way that the Lord led them—and to hear all the way that He went Himself—these “forty years in the wilderness to humble them, and to prove them”; feeding them with they knew not what, but with the very “corn of heaven” as it turned out to be; even every order and Appointment that proceeded out of the mouth of God to do them good at the latter end.

Every possible variety of experience in the history of the multitude that no man can number, and all the untold experiences of our blessed Lord Himself make up the materials for that converse; experience to which the most fascinating conceptions of human life that man has ever imagined will be as nothing.

When all the company for whom the right hand of God is the appointed place—the sheep of His right hand—the disciples of His training are together; there will be pleasures of converse concerning His leading—“pleasures for evermore”—and they will give thanks to Him who “led his people through the wilderness, for his mercy endureth for ever.”

THE END

³⁹ “*When ye Pray*,” by Dr. C. H. Waller.

⁴⁰ The last clause of Ps. 16.11 is not cited on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2.28. They are “pleasures for eternity.”