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## Psalm lxxxiv.

A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND LEWIS B. RADFORD, D.D., BISHOP OF GOULBURN.

THERE is something not merely fascinating but fruitful in the study of the ways in which translators and commentators have interpreted the words of the Hebrew poet-saint. Two vivid impressions are left upon the mind of the student. The first is that the spiritual benefit derived through the words of the psalmist is often derived largely from the imagination and intuition of the reader. There is an inspiration of language as well as of thought. The words in which the translators have given us the psalm have a double life. They draw from the Hebrew original something of the soul of the writer and his day; but they also bring to their task something of the soul of the translator and his generation. They convey the spiritual experience of the psalmist; but they bring to light also the spiritual experience of the reader of the psalm. The second impression is that spiritual truth is often suggested and spiritual experience enriched by a rendering which is linguistically incorrect. Behind the latest and truest translation—and such is the Revised Version on most points—there lies a long history of variations and errors, ancient and mediæval, some of them surviving in the Prayer-Book version, which are revealed and rejected by the touchstone of modern scholarship. Yet the history of devotional experience proves that souls have caught glimpses of God's truth through errors of interpretation. The emergence of spiritual truth through literary error only deepens our conviction and widens our conception of the inspiration of the Bible. The Word of God is richer and stronger than the words of men in which it is enshrined and conveyed. Devout souls have missed the food which those words were meant to convey; but they have found other food in and round those words, and that other food also has been a very Word of God.

The theme of the eighty-fourth psalm is the joy of God's house. The point of view is that of the faithful Israelite far away from the Temple. It is not clear whether the psalm was written away from Jerusalem out of the writer's actual hunger for the worship of the sacred courts, or written in Jerusalem as a retrospect or an imaginary picture of the feelings of the exile or pilgrim. Nor can we determine the historical occasion of the psalm. 'Look upon

the face of thine anointed' may be a reference to the king as the Divinely appointed leader of the nation's life, but there is no evidence to suggest any particular king. David is out of the question, for the house of God is evidently not the Tabernacle but the Temple. Still less, therefore, can the psalm be a psalm of David's own writing, when he was banished by the rebellion of Absalom and longing from afar for the peace of the sanctuary.

I. The first stanza (1-4) represents the hungry cry of the devout exile, or the Israelite living too far from Jerusalem to visit the Temple—envying the very birds that nest round the sanctuary, and the ministers who officiate or the worshippers who attend regularly at the services.

How dear is thy dwelling-place, O Lord of hosts.  
My soul hath pined, yea, even fainted for the courts  
of the Lord:  
My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.  
Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house,  
And the swallow a nest for herself where she hath  
laid her young,  
Even (or, by) thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King  
and my God.  
Happy are they that dwell in thy house:  
They will be always singing thy praise.

The psalm is entitled 'a Psalm of the sons of Korah.' Dr. Plumptre suggested that it was perhaps written by a Levite, or company of Levites, of the family of Korah, hindered by the Syrian invasion under Sennacherib from going up to Jerusalem to take their turn in the Temple services. There is something specially appropriate in that case in the familiar reminiscence of the birds in the eaves of the Temple courts, and again in the joy of humble service on the part of 'a doorkeeper in the house of my God,' for the sons of Korah were the 'keepers of the gate' of the Tabernacle in David's time, and probably held similar office in the Temple. But these touches are only suggestive, not conclusive. Whether the psalmist be a Temple minister or not, he has gone deep down to the experience of the devout worshipper—priest, levite, or layman.

There are two difficulties to note in this stanza. (1) The AV, 'crieth out for the living God,' is in harmony with the preceding idea of intense longing.

But the word translated 'cry' usually denotes an utterance of joy. The RV, 'cry out unto the living God,' is ambiguous: it might mean the cry of spiritual hunger or merely of prayer in general. The RV margin, 'sing for joy,' is truer than the PB version, 'rejoice in the living God,' for the Hebrew word marks not merely a sense but a voice of gladness, e.g. the singing of a pilgrim band on its way, or the cheering on its arrival. Cheyne translates 'my heart and my flesh ring out their joy unto the living God.' Body and soul unite in the joy of life and worship. But how is this present tense to be reconciled with the soul-hunger of the distant exile in the earlier part of the verse? The perfect tense, 'hath pined, fainted,' may be the recollection of a craving now past and almost lost in the delight of satisfaction; or the joy may be partly the joy of memory and partly the joy of anticipation, either or both intermingling with the sadness of exile.

(2) The other difficulty is the self-made difficulty of the unimaginative critic who insists that 'altars were places for sacrifices made by fire, and not places to which birds would resort,' and proceeds to reconstruct the sentence accordingly. One critic makes 'thine altars' an exclamation, *i.e.* 'would that I could find a home at thine altars.' Another shifts the altars into the next verse—'happy are they that dwell in thy house (by) thine altars,' or 'at thy altars they praise thee for ever.' The last reconstruction involves transposing the whole line, 'happy are they that dwell in thy house,' to the very end of the stanza. The result is certainly symmetrical, if the further step is taken of violently transposing the second beatitude, 'happy is the man whose strength is in thee,' from the beginning to the end of the second stanza. The three stanzas then end with three uniform beatitudes:

Happy are they that dwell in thy house.  
 Happy is the man whose strength is in thee.  
 Happy is the man that trusteth in thee.

It looks pretty when these three lines are printed as refrains to their respective stanzas. But the dislocations leave the stanzas abrupt and jerky; and they imply a gratuitously large accusation of carelessness on the part of the scribes who copied the manuscripts and have to be made responsible for the mistakes which the critics have discovered. Incidentally also the removal of the altars to another verse leaves the poor birds homeless or their home unplaced. And all this disturbance is dictated by the blind wisdom that would confine

the psalmist to a rigid literalism. Obviously the altar stands for the Temple, with its tree-lined precincts and its inviting eaves. 'Still the swallow seeks the Temple enclosure at Jerusalem, and the Mosque of Omar, as a secure and safe nesting-place' (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 206). A village priest would not let swallows nest on his altar or even inside his chancel. But when the swallow that nests in the ivy on the chancel wall comes sweeping through the window to perch on the reredos, his thoughts fly irresistibly to the psalmist's picture. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the critic has so fallen in love with his own scheme of metrical and symmetrical analysis of the psalms that he cannot abide a psalm which breaks his rules, but must torture it into obedience.

II. The second stanza strikes another note—the happiness of the pilgrim. There are all sorts of happiness in religion. There is the happiness of possession; this is for priest and people within constant reach of the spiritual privileges of the Temple. And there is the happiness of perseverance; this is for the pilgrim making his toilsome journey through the desert to the Holy City.

Happy is the man whose strength is in thee:  
 In their hearts are the highways.

The PB version (taken from the Great Bible of 1540) has 'in whose heart are thy ways.' (1) This suggests the idea of ways of conduct; God's ways, *i.e.* God's laws for human life, are chosen and laid down firmly in their heart. The idea may have come from Luther's version, *von Herzen Dir nachwandeln*, 'they walk after thee with their whole heart.' The same Hebrew word *mesillah* is used metaphorically in Pr 15<sup>10</sup>, 'the path of the upright is made an highway,' and 16<sup>17</sup>, 'the highway of the upright is to depart from evil.' Compare the partial parallels of Ps 37<sup>31</sup>, 'the law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide,' and Is 51<sup>7</sup>, 'the people in whose heart is my law.'

(2) On the other hand, 'thy ways' might mean God's ways of preparing for the fulfilment of His purpose, *i.e.* they love to meditate on God's ways of dealing with mankind; cf. perhaps Is 40<sup>3</sup>, 'cast up a highway for our God.'

But there is no 'thy' in the Hebrew, which has simply 'in their heart (are the) highways.' These *mesilloth* are literal highways, not city lanes or streets, but wide roads leading to the city, as in Is 62<sup>10</sup>, 'prepare ye the way of the people; cast up the highway' for the return to Jerusalem from the Exile. The Septuagint has seized the right idea,

'he purposed goings-up (*ἀναβάσεις*) in his heart,' and the Vulgate follows suit: *ascensiones in corde suo disposuit*. Wycliffe adhered closely to the Vulgate: 'he hath disposid (marg. ordeyned) stiyngis (cf. Germ. *steigung*, Norwegian *stige*, *i.e.* ascent) in his herte in the valei of teeris.' The Genevan Version of 1560 followed exactly the Great Bible of 1540. The AV of 1611 is ambiguous: 'in whose hearts are the ways of them.' It was the RV of 1884 which first added the necessary explanation: 'in whose heart are the highways to Zion.' The Norwegian Psalter curiously inverts the sentence, 'whose heart stands upon (*i.e.* is fixed upon) the made roads,' but adds a happy marginal note, *d.e. Veiene til Guds Hus*, '*i.e.* roads to God's house.' Various critics have tried to improve the Hebrew text. Baentsch thinks that the LXX *ἀναβάσεις* represents a variant reading of the Hebrew, *viz. mā'aloṭh*, *i.e.* ascents, the steps leading up to the Temple courts. Cheyne interpolates imaginary words to eke out the text: '(they go as pilgrims on) the highways (with gladness) in their hearts.' There is no need or excuse for such drastic treatment. The two Hebrew words 'in-their-heart-highways' give a perfectly intelligible meaning as they stand. The absent Israelite keeps vividly in mind the highways that lead home to Zion. He is always remembering them as he saw them last, or already contemplating them as he sees them in the hope of the future. He may be the exile anticipating the return from captivity, cf. Jer 31<sup>21</sup>, 'set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest' (into exile), or the pilgrim looking forward to the broad way which lies beyond the first desert stages of his journey to the festival. In either case, the highways are always in his mind, first as a purpose on which his heart is set, then as a support on which his heart is stayed. Perhaps the authors of the Targum, the traditional Chaldee interpretation, were not mistaking the word, but only paraphrasing the sense when they wrote, 'in whose hearts is confidence.' No danger or hardship can banish or blur the inward vision of the distant white road on which the traveller has staked his faith.

Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well;

And the pools are filled with water.

So runs the PB version. AV has *the valley of Baca*; RV, *valley of Weeping*; RV margin, 'or, *balsam trees*; Heb. *Baca*. See 2 S 5<sup>23</sup>. The 'vale of misery,' which has passed through Christian hymns into common parlance as a description of this life

on earth, is a legacy through the Vulgate *in valle lacrymarum* (Wyclif, *in the valei of teeris*) from the LXX *ἐν τῇ κοίλαδι τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος*, *i.e.* the vale of lamentation. The Greek translator evidently took the Hebrew word *bakha* as a form of the verb *bakhaḥ*, 'to weep.' Renan saw a reference to a valley between the Jordan and Jerusalem in which a stream of water flows from the rock, 'the valley of trickling waters.' But the valley of the psalmist, real or imaginary, was a dry valley; that is the point of the moral. Probably the name comes from the *bakha* tree, translated mulberry tree in 2 S 5<sup>23</sup>, where it is the name of the place of David's victory over the Philistines. More probably the *bakha* is the balsam tree (RV marg. 2 S 5<sup>23</sup>), called the weeping-tree from its exuding 'tears' of gum. It grows in arid valleys, and the name '*bakha* valley' may have been the name of a particular valley or a standing description of waterless valleys in general. Of course the name may have gathered round itself associations of human weeping, either from some disaster which befell there or from the general memory of sufferings by the way. Or pious fancy might suggest weeping as the etymological explanation of the word. Some scholars identify the *Baca* valley of the psalm with *Bochim*, *i.e.* weepers, the valley so named from the weeping of the Israelites over the angel's warning in Jg 2<sup>6</sup>; cf. *Allon-bachuth*, the oak of weeping, the burial-place of Rebekah's nurse (Gn 35<sup>6</sup>). Here in the psalm, however, the dominant idea is the barren dryness of the natural scene. The pilgrim's faith makes the dry desert 'a place of springs,' RV. In Is 35<sup>7</sup> it is the power of God that makes 'the glowing sand become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water,' a fit environment for the restored nation. Here it is the faith of the pilgrim that works the miracle, and sustains his soul with living water through the barren stages of his journey, until his perseverance is rewarded by the rain from heaven.

The LXX version went off at a tangent, mistaking the Heb. *mā'yan* ('well' or spring) for *mā'on* ('a habitation'), a difference of a single stroke in one Hebrew letter, and translating the phrase into *εἰς τόπον ὃν ἔθετο*, 'he purposed in his heart going up in (through) the valley of weeping to the place which he appointed,' *i.e.* the place of worship which God had appointed. The pilgrim's purpose draws its motive and its support from the conviction that Jerusalem is the sacred city of God's choice—a sound idea, though not to be got out of the Hebrew text. Luther went back rightly to the Hebrew, *machen daselbst Brunnen*, *i.e.* 'and make springs even there.'

The water in this verse may be a literal reference to actual rain, the breaking of the drought ; but it may rather be a metaphor for the comfort of God's presence realized by the trustful pilgrim. The sentence itself has had a chequered career. (1) The LXX confused the word *moreh* ('early rain') with the word *moreh* ('giver or teacher of the law'), and translated the line *καὶ γὰρ εὐλογίας δώσει ὁ νομοθετῶν*, followed by the Vulgate, *etenim benedictionem dabit legislator*, which appears again in Wycliffe's 'for the zyuer (giver) of the lawe schal zyue (give) blessing.' Jerome's version ran, *benedictionibus amicitur doctor*, and Luther adopted this rendering, but in the plural, *die Lehrer werden mit viel Segen geschmückt*, 'the teachers shall be clothed with much blessing.' An interesting passage-of-arms took place over this verse between Romanist and Protestant scholars. In 1582 Gregory Martin, reader in Divinity at the English Romanist college at Rheims, wrote a book on the corruption of Scripture by 'the Heretikes of our daies, specially the English Sectaries.' He appealed to the authority of Jerome in defence of the rendering 'teacher,' interpreted as a prophecy of Christ, 'where you with the latter rabbins, the enemies of Christ, translate "the rain covereth the pools"' (Geneva Version of 1560). What cold stuff is this in respect of that other translation so clearly pointing to Christ our Master and Doctor !' William Fulke, Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, replied in 1583 with 'A Defense of the sincere and true translations,' etc., in which he lays down the sound principle that it is 'not safe for the strengthening of our faith to draw places of Scripture unto Christ which by the Holy Ghost had another meaning : so shall the Jews laugh us to scorn : and the faith of the ignorant, which is grounded upon such translation, if it shall be opened unto them that it is untrue, shall be mightily shaken, and brought in doubt of all other places of Scripture applied to the like end.' In this psalm, he insists, 'where the prophet commendeth the courage of the people that travelled to Jerusalem through the deserts and dry places that wanted water, it is most apt to understand that God filled their pits with rain for their comfort. This, how cold soever it is counted of you that care not whereon faith should be grounded, yet it is a hundred times more comfortable, to a godly conscience that desireth to be established in truth, than any violent wresting of the Scripture from the true and the natural sense to any other interpretation, how good in show soever it may be.'

(2) Fulke was right in defending the *rain*. But the English versions from Coverdale to the AV went

wrong over the *pools*. *Pools* is the English for *berekoth*, but the Hebrew text has *berakoth*, which means *blessings*. The RV has at last given us the true translation : 'yea, the early rain covereth it (*i.e.* the dry valley) with blessings.' *Clotheth* would have been as correct, and more vivid.

But so much for translation ; now for interpretation. What is the rain ? It may mean actual rain, the early showers with which God rewards the perseverance of the traveller whose faith has sustained his body through the dry stages of his hard journey. But it is more probably a continuation of the metaphor of the springs. Both springs and rain are 'the inward subjective miracles wrought by faith,' which transform earth and sky. The pilgrim's faith is 'a staff of Moses to draw water from the rock' (Cheyne) ; it also paints the bare valley with the blessings of Divine comfort, 'the flowers of the inner landscape, faith, hope, and love.' This is no mirage that vanishes and leaves thirst all the thirstier for the momentary relief of an imaginary glimpse of water ahead. It is a spiritual reality which conquers bodily suffering and transforms barren sight. 'Man doth not live by bread alone,' or by water alone, 'but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' But surely Cheyne is mistaken in regarding the springs and the rain as both similarly subjective. Springs and rain are alike spiritual here ; but the springs are subjective, the rain is objective. Faith finds springs on earth ; God sends rain from heaven. The rain is the comfort which God gives in response to the faith which looks up to receive a comfort not found below. To pursue the figure a step farther, the springs are indeed the result of past rain, and faith is faithless if it looks not around to find the goodness of God, the grace of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit, working out under and through the things of this life which have been penetrated by the power of God, their creator and preserver, who has made matter the instrument of spirit. But faith is equally faithless if it looks not also upward for the present renewal and the immediate revelation which come down from above. God is immanent, but also from first to last transcendent. The Church is at once the heritage of past experience and the home of present inspiration.

They will go from strength to strength :  
And every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.

*From strength to strength* represents exactly the Hebrew *me-chayil el-chayil*, LXX ἐκ δυνάμεως εἰς δύναμιν, Vulg. *de virtute in virtutem*, whence comes Wycliffe's *fro vertue in to vertue*. Jerome is more

accurate: *de fortitudine in fortitudinem*. It is not a question of moral character but of physical strength. The pilgrims gain instead of losing vigour as they draw near to their goal: 'fatigue is banished by the prospect of appearing before God in Zion' (Cheyne). Luther paraphrases: 'they gain one victory after another' (*Sie erhalten einen Sieg nach dem andern*)—apparently a suggestion of conflicts with raiders or robbers by the way, or perhaps merely of obstacles overcome. There is, however, a variant reading which found favour with Rabbi Jehuda of old, with Bishop Horsley a century ago, and recently with Baentsch, viz. *me-chel el-chel*, 'from battlement to battlement.' Dr. Briggs (*Int. Crit. Comm.*) interprets this of the pilgrims passing from one walled town to another for protection on their way, or from tower to tower as they pass from the gates of Jerusalem to the Temple. But the traditional Hebrew text agrees better with other passages of Scripture which speak of the renewal of strength for those who go on God's business, e.g. Is 40<sup>30</sup>, 'they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' Christian parallels occur to mind at once. 'Of his fulness we all received, and *grace for grace*' (Jn 1<sup>16</sup>)—grace used aright is rewarded by the giving of fresh grace. 'We all . . . are transformed into the same image *from glory to glory*' (2 Co 3<sup>18</sup>). The gospel is a revelation of 'a righteousness of God *from faith to faith*' (Ro 1<sup>17</sup>). The first two of these parallels sound like an echo, only a deeper echo, of a later line in this psalm, 'the Lord will give *grace and glory*.' Perhaps, after all, Wycliffe's *from vertue in to vertue* was not an over-literal rendering of the Vulgate *virtus* in the sense of manly vigour, but a suggestion of the growth of spiritual strength, a mystical interpretation of the bodily refreshment in the text before him.

There remains still one interesting question of translation. The Hebrew of the latter half of this verse has simply, 'shall appear unto God in Zion.' The verb is in the singular, and there is no subject to the verb. The LXX translator read *el-elohim*, *unto God*, as though it were *el-elohim*, *God of gods*, and rendered it *ὁφθῆσεται ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν ἐν Σιών*, whence the Vulgate *videbitur Deus deorum*. Coverdale followed this in his first version in 1535, 'and so the God of gods appeareth unto them in Zion.' Matthew's Bible in 1537 restored the true order of the Hebrew, but retained both *el* (*unto*) and *el* (*God*)—'unto the God of gods appeareth (every one of them) in Zion.' Coverdale kept this rendering in the Great Bible of 1540. The intrusive *el* was dropped in the Genevan Version and the AV, 'every one of them appeareth in Zion before God,' and in

the still better RV, 'appeareth before God in Zion.' 'Appearing before God' was the regular expression for a visit to the Temple at the great festivals. The addition of 'every one of them' is justified, and in fact required by the singular verb 'appeareth.' Not one pilgrim faints or falls by the way. Luther makes the pilgrims 'win one victory after another, so that man must see that the true God is in Zion.' This paraphrase is true in substance. The triumph of the pilgrims over a succession of difficulties and dangers is a witness to the supremacy of their God. So, too, the most irrefutable evidence of the Christian religion lies in its spiritual victories, in the winning through of Christian men to the goal of their moral destiny. But Luther's rendering is not to be got out of the Hebrew. And it stands alone; no translator repeated Luther's splendid error.

And so the stanza passes to its close with the prayer of the pilgrims as they stand at last in the Temple courts. 'O Lord of hosts' is the true refrain. It came at the end of the first stanza. It comes again at the end of the third. Yet it may be that the cry,

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer,  
Give ear, O God of Jacob,

is not the prayer of the pilgrim band in the Temple, but the prayer of the lonely psalmist. He has pronounced his two beatitudes—the blessedness of the people who tread the Temple courts continually, the blessedness of the pilgrims who travel to its great festivals. 'Now he pours out a prayer for himself, that he, though distant, may share the same blessing' (Perowne). The singular '*my* prayer' is certainly more intelligible here as the psalmist's personal petition than on the supposition that he is speaking in the person of the leader of the pilgrim band.

III. The third stanza is less of a unity than the first or the second. It begins with the prayer of the pilgrims apparently for the king, perhaps a king whose reforming zeal made him dear to the faithful few:

Behold, O God, our shield,  
And look upon the face of thine anointed,

*i.e.* accept his person. *Shield* is a common description of God as the protector of His people. But some scholars render the line, 'O God, behold our shield.' The king was the embodiment of the nation's hope of safety as well as the bearer of a Divine commission of authority. There is no need to see here any thought of 'The Anointed,' the

Messiah, of whom the best king was but a type and a prophecy.

Then the psalmist passes to the recital of the blessings of true devotion :

Surely a day in thy courts is better than a thousand ordinary days in the world outside. He is returning to his first thought, the happiness of nearness to the promised presence of God in His house :

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

The idea is clearly that the poorest place in the precincts of God's house is far better than the proudest place in the society of a godless world outside. But as the doorkeeper, 'the keeper of the threshold,' was an official of high trust, we must either interpret *doorkeeper* to mean the lowest under-servant of the Temple guardian, or, better still, go back to the simple words of the Hebrew, *be at the threshold* (AV marg. *sit*, RV *stand*), and interpret them of a lowly suppliant, like the publican of the Lord's parable. The LXX boldly says *παρρηπτεῖσθαι*, 'lie prostrate,' and the Vulgate *abjectus esse*.

For the Lord God is a sun and a shield.

Commentators point out that this is the only place in the Old Testament where God is directly called a sun, 'though the ideas conveyed by the metaphor are frequent.' The abstinence from this title may have been due to the pious Hebrew's dread of the prevalent sun-worship of the Eastern world. The LXX avoids the word by giving a remote paraphrase: 'the Lord God loveth mercy and truth.' The Targum keeps the word *shemesh* (sun), but gives it the meaning of *high wall* which it has in Is 54<sup>12</sup>. The Syriac version has *our sustainer and helper*. The later Greek versions went back fearlessly to the *sun* of the Hebrew text. It is noteworthy that while in v.<sup>9</sup> God is 'our shield,' the guardian of the nation, here it is the individual who finds in Him all that he needs—as in the exquisite paraphrase of Lyte's familiar hymn :

Sun and shield alike Thou art,  
Guide and guard my erring heart.

The Lord will give grace and glory:  
No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Perhaps the grace and the glory correspond to the shield and the sun, especially in view of St. John's saying that 'grace and truth came by Jesus Christ'

—grace to guard from sin and harm, and truth, which is the revelation of the glory of God, to guide the steps of man.

Happy is the man that trusteth in Thee.

Here the psalm ends with the last and best beatitude of the three. Priest and people in constant possession of spiritual privileges; happy are they. Pilgrims persevering in their toilsome travel to the rare opportunity of common worship; happy too are they. But the root of the happiness and helpfulness of worship, frequent or rare, is the simple trust of the soul of man in his God; it is this which keeps him, whether he be near the house of God or far away, always at home with God.

IV. The psalm has had a wonderful history in Christian life and worship. In the Gregorian psalter it was appointed for use at the dedication of a church. The sites chosen for Benedictine houses were sprinkled with holy water to the chanting of this psalm. It is not used as a proper psalm for special occasions in the English Prayer Book; but it is familiar to all churchgoing Christians in the guise of a hymn—Lyte's 'Pleasant are Thy courts above.' The American Church uses it on two festivals—the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and the Transfiguration. For all these purposes it is appropriate as a psalm in praise of worship. But it has a wider range than worship. Wycliffe's heading, drawn from the commentary of Nicolas of Lyra (d. 1340), runs: 'This salm declareth the desijr of holi men, lifing in this wicked world, to come to heven bliss.' It was this longing for the Father's house on high as their final home which brought the psalm so readily to the lips of the saints of whom Prothero's *Psalms in Human Life* tells the tale—Paula, the Roman lady, the disciple of Jerome, dying of fever in her convent at Bethlehem in 403; Francis de Sales as he lay nigh unto death in his law-student days at Padua in 1591, and again when he came to die as bishop of Geneva in 1622; and the two Scottish Covenanters, Isabel Alison and Marion Howie, on the scaffold at Edinburgh while the hangman was preparing the gallows. It gave Thomas Aquinas his call to the religious life. 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,' he read; and he obeyed the call and entered the Order of St. Dominic. It was part of Thomas Carlyle's appeal to men to struggle on Godward: 'He will withhold no good thing from them that love Him. This, as it is the ancient psalmist's faith, let it also be ours. It is the Alpha and Omega, I reckon, of all possessions that can belong to man.'

It would be a long but not unfruitful task to follow this psalm through the imaginative meditations of ancient and mediæval interpretation. Not content with historical and literary exegesis, piety turned to mystical allegory. The tabernacles and the courts were contrasted by a refinement of distinction: the one stood for heaven, the other for earth; or the one for the tents of the militant orders, and the other for the houses of the contemplative orders of the religious life. Natural history and spiritual experience were ransacked to illustrate the respective meanings of the swallow and the sparrow as types of Christian souls. The altar was interpreted as the Cross, the Eucharist, the humanity of our Lord, the Church, the throne of heaven beneath which wait the souls of martyred saints. The 'goings-up' of the LXX and the Vulgate were transferred from the Temple steps to the stages of Christian progress in general, or the three ways of salvation—the purgative (repentance), the illuminative (faith), the unitive (love)—by which man climbs upward to God. A variant rendering of 'from strength to strength' as 'from troop to troop' suggested the idea of new pilgrims hastening onward and overtaking and passing band after band of earlier starters, just as the harlot and the publican went into the kingdom of heaven before the priest and the lawyer: 'the first shall be last, and the last first.' 'From fortress to fortress' suggested the idea of timid souls hurrying from one spiritual tower of refuge to the next across the perilous zone of temptation—from their last communion to their next, through days of ordinary life fraught with spiritual danger. There is much here and there that seems artificial and even absurd in

the mysticisms and allegorisms collected in Neale and Littledale's commentary on the psalms from primitive and mediæval writers, but there is also much that came from the very heart of old-world piety, and still comes home to pious minds with the touch of reality. A large part of the appeal which this psalm, like many another, makes to the deepest religious instincts is drawn not from the primary meaning of the psalmist's words, but from the thoughts that have flowed through or gathered round those words in other minds. Even to-day we carry one of its prayers into the sanctuary of Christian worship in the eucharistic hymn of Dr. Bright:

Look, Father, look on His anointed face,  
And only look on us as found in Him.

Yet while meditation may fearlessly wander along the paths that open to right and left, and feed on all that offers, we are wisest to study the psalm as it came first from the heart of the faithful Israelite dwelling far away from the sanctuary, or making his toilsome way to the Holy City. So studied, the psalm speaks simply and directly again to all who live in like circumstances. City folk, almost gospel-hardened by continual opportunity of worship, need the reminder of this psalm to make better and deeper use of the wealth of religious privilege at their doors. To country folk in bush and backblock it brings a message of comfort, the blessing of 'spiritual communion,' to those who toil at a distance from the altar, and who must cherish the very hunger itself lest their souls cease to hunger and settle down to live on the lower levels of contented indifference.

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## The Development of Paul's Doctrine of Dying and Rising again with Christ.

BY WILLIAM E. WILSON, B.D., SELLY OAK COLLEGES, BIRMINGHAM.

IN his illuminating Kerr Lectures, *The Gospel and its Tributaries*, Professor E. F. Scott, while denying that Paul was to any large extent influenced by the Mystery Religions, holds that in one or two instances his teaching is most easily explained by assuming that they had supplied him with some of his categories of thought.

'There can,' he says, 'be little doubt, in view of

modern enquiry, that Paul availed himself of various suggestions from the mythologies of his time. Christ is in some measure assimilated to those "Lords" of the Oriental cults who died and were restored to life, and with whom their votaries sought to identify themselves by ecstatic worship. It is hard to say how far Paul intended that all the details of his mystical drama should be taken literally' (*op. cit.*, p. 148).