

God's blessing, have kept the Church straight; as, I think, we should have helped to keep them straight. Whereas now they have not only left us (as far as they are concerned) at the mercy of the Ritualists, but they have so used their political influence as to weaken Protestantism in the House of Commons, and even to set over us as Prime Minister the man who, while he was in office, did his best to flood the Church with Ritualists, and who is even now trying to get an Act passed to increase the already too great power of Rome.

Instead of the Evangelical Churchmen leaving the Church, I say, let the Dissenters come back to it; and then we may look for God's blessing on our Church and nation.

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ART. III.—THE THREE ABIDING GRACES, AS EXHIBITED IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

NO. 3.—CHRISTIAN CHARITY (IN PSALM CXXXIII.).

IT has often been supposed, and with great probability, that the fifteen Psalms immediately following the 119th, which the Jews called "the songs of degrees," were so named because used by pious Israelites in their journeys to Jerusalem for the three annual feasts.¹

But as the word Jerusalem is frequently used in Scripture either as a figurative title for the glorified Church or as the name of the central metropolis on the earth renewed,² this series of Psalms must also have been intended for the refreshment of pilgrims, in various generations, since as well as before the desolation of the literal Jerusalem, on their way to the future "city of God."

And it is not difficult to discern the appropriateness to the spiritual pilgrimage of the subject prominent in each of those fifteen Psalms.

The first of them expresses patient endurance in uncongenial society: "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech." The last utters eager salutations at the journey's glorious end: "Lift up your heads in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." And each intervening song contains a seasonable topic for servants of God who are looking on to that end.

¹ Another suggestion is that the priests sang these fifteen psalms as they slowly mounted the fifteen steps in the temple at Jerusalem, between the Court of the Women and the Court of Israel.

² See proof-texts in *THE CHURCHMAN* for December, 1890, p. 126.

But the only Psalm in the series to which I have now specially to direct attention is that song which immediately precedes the last, and which extolls the *third* of those abiding Christian graces which I am now endeavouring to illustrate by portions of the Psalter.

When the New Testament Apostle Paul wrote, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three," he immediately added, "But the greatest of these is charity." St. Peter more than once ascribed a similar pre-eminence to that grace—"Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves"; "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." And the exhortation of St. John, who with St. Peter had heard from the very lips of the Redeemer that *love* is the peculiar mark of His disciples, precisely accords with the emphasis with which Christ Jesus uttered the "new commandment"—"Beloved, let us love . . . in deed and in truth, and hereby we shall know that we are of the truth."

But the Apostles well understood that, in one sense, the great commandment was not new, because love has been in every age the proper characteristic of all the children of God. The ancient Psalmist's way of magnifying the charity, which in all generations abideth, is by commending the genuine fellowship which must be conspicuous in a community wherein love is constantly exercised. "Behold," he exclaims, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

This perfect fellowship, this attractiveness of active love, will only be fully witnessed when the whole company of the saints shall be combined in the New Jerusalem. Our Lord Himself, in His famous but often misquoted address to His Heavenly Father, has expressly taught us that the admirable and attractive unity of His people will not be openly manifested until His Second Advent; and that when it shall then be beautifully exhibited in His perfect Church, it will be the instrument of converting to Him the remainder of mankind.

On three remarkable points, in three memorable requests, He sublimely uttered His will to the Father: "That those whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am"; "That they may behold My glory"; and "That they all may be one" [for the accomplishment of this magnificent result] "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."¹

Not till then will the Holy Universal Church be visible in its oneness. Not till then will the goodness and pleasantness of perfectly-loving fellowship be either experienced or perceptible.²

And yet pilgrims, on their way to the city which "lieth four-

¹ St. John xvii. 24, 21.

² Rev. xxi. 16.

square," should so anticipate by meditation the charms of its oneness, as to copy already a large amount of its charity.

Our psalmist, who, if he was a contemporary of Ezra, had the happiness of living when the returned exiles put into practice a high degree of heavenly co-operation,¹ introduced into this travelling song two metaphors, which may improve into a more intelligent expectation our *hope* of a perfectly-united community hereafter; and may also promote a vigorous *imitation* of the love which will then be perfect.

(1) The dwelling together of Christians in a unity which will be completely developed hereafter, and which should be diligently aimed at now, reminded this Old Testament prophet, firstly, of the holy oil, which after it had been "poured"² upon the high priest in the temple, trickled downwards to the extremity of his clothing. "It is like," he said, "the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments." Consciously, or unconsciously, the psalmist thus states a truth, which has since been taught in the New Testament, with unmistakable clearness, that the power of loving, which the population of the New Jerusalem will hereafter possess in perfection, and which should be the peculiar mark of all who are "called to be saints" now, has its source entirely in the finished work of the sinner's Glorious Representative, the Lord Jesus. Christ died not merely to make complete atonement for the sin of the whole world, but also to restore the Divine image to all His people. "Our old man," said St. Paul, "is crucified with Him,"³ because one precious result of His crucifixion (which issued in His Glorious Ascension), is the reappearance of active righteousness in those who are His. The genuine manhood, conspicuous in Himself—to whom the Spirit was given "without measure," when He went about doing good—shall, in the world to come, dignify the least in the kingdom of heaven, as surely as the unearthly perfume scented the remotest fringe of Aaron's sacred robe. And the charm of that charity, which is the greatest Christian grace, may even now be won, in the various details⁴ of its excellency, by all, even the humblest believers, who

¹ Ezra iii. 1, "The people gathered themselves together *as one man* to Jerusalem.—Nehemiah viii. 1, "All the people gathered themselves together *as one man*, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel."

² "Poured," in Lev. viii. 2, is apparently intended to signify the profusion in which it fell on Aaron's head, in contrast to the lesser measure in which it was "sprinkled," ver. 11, on the altar and other sacred things.

³ Rom. vi. 6.

⁴ "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own," etc., etc.

ask with persevering diligence in His name. Out of His fulness can they all receive, and gift upon gift.

(2) The psalmist's second illustration of the charity arising out of genuine fellowship, has greatly puzzled some commentators, because he compares it to the generosity of a loftier mountain, well situated for condensing moisture, in bestowing a portion of its vapours on a less exalted and drier eminence. The active kindness of brethren dwelling together in unity is, he says, "as the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion," and a difficulty has been suggested, because of the great distance between Hermon in the far north, and Zion in the south, of Palestine. The A.V. is "as the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion." This repetition appears to destroy entirely the point of the metaphor. Yet Bishop Horne remarks, "Bishop Lowth seemeth fully to have justified our translators in supplying the ellipsis as they have done, and thereby removing the absurdity of making the dew of Hermon, a mountain on one side of Jordan, towards the eastern extremity of Canaan, descend on the mountain of Zion, which was situated on the other side of Jordan, at Jerusalem." Dr. Bonar's remark is, "Not the Hermon or Sirion of Deut. iii. 9, for it is crowned with perpetual snow, but that Hermon which rises from the plain of Jezreel." Is it not a sufficient explanation that the psalmist had noticed¹ the general tendency of vapours, generated at a lofty elevation, to descend wholesomely on less favoured heights; and that he selected, as the instance of kindly loftiness, the most conspicuous summit in the Holy Land, the snows of which are melted by warm currents from the tropical valley of the Jordan near it, whilst he chose as the specimen of a benefited spot, that sacred hill which has been for ages the predicted centre of the saint's everlasting inheritance?

The application, anyhow, is not obscure. The truth intended to be figured evidently is, that among hearts in whom the Holy Ghost has created heavenly charity, the better endowed delight to

Bishop Alexander, p. 182, who calls the illustration "one of the most beautiful images in the Psalter," says "it is drawn by one who had looked upon the mountains with the eye of a poet, as well as upon the sanctuary with the eye of a saint." Delitzsch firmly maintains the translation, to which some have objected; quoting from Van de Velde's travels, "one ought to have seen Hermon, with its white-golden crown glistening aloft in the blue sky, in order to be able rightly to understand the figure"; and, afterwards, adding, as his own comment, "an abundant dew, when warm days have preceded, might very well be diverted to Jerusalem, by the operation of the cold current of air sweeping down from the north over Hermon. We know, indeed, from our own experience, how far off a cold air coming from the Alps is perceptible, and produces its effects."

share, with those whose possessions are less, their money, their dignity, their intellectual vigour, or any other sort of wealth.

Such kindness, even in the measure in which it can be exercised by renewed souls on this crooked world—in spite of Satanic wiles, a remaining infection of nature and worldly snares—is often extremely beautiful.

How sweet, how heavenly is the sight
 When they who love the Lord,
 In one another's peace delight,
 And so fulfil His word.

When each can feel his brother's sigh,
 And with him bear a part,
 When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
 And joy from heart to heart.

When love in one delightful stream,
 Through every bosom flows,
 When union sweet, and kind esteem,
 In every action glows.

But, if there is an attractive charm occasionally visible, in a few struggling Christians now, how infinitely more glorious will be the never-interrupted excellence of a countless multitude, thoroughly walking in love, on the world to come, with *Jehovah* manifested in perfect human nature eternally in their midst.

The inspired of all ages who have, in any measure, anticipated that future, agree in describing it as *existence of the highest, holiest, happiest type.*

The latest prophet of the New Testament declares concerning it, amongst other predicted details: "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, the tabernacle of God is with men . . . and they shall be His people . . . and there shall be no more death . . . for the former things are passed away."

The more ancient seer who wrote this psalm, had a very similar vision of it when he closed his song with these few||but expressive words: *There* [where the perfect love, secured by the Redeemer, shall be fragrant in every one of his "members"]—*There* [where all shall be continually ready to employ their own advantages for the benefit of others]—*There the Lord commanded His blessing and Life for evermore.*

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