

in return for all that He had done and suffered. It had been bestowed upon Him in fulfilment of a universal law; and, if that law took effect upon the Head, it would in due time, as the members shared the spirit of the Head, take effect also upon them.

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### THE SIXTY-THIRD PSALM.

THE Feast of Tabernacles, important in the very earliest times, became still more endeared to the Jews by its connexion with the Maccabæan heroes. [It is in the later Maccabæan age that we first hear of that strange custom, implied in John vii. 37, of drawing water from the Pool of Siloam, and pouring it out as a drink-offering at the foot of the altar. The rejoicings of the multitude on the last day of the feast passed all bounds, and an ordinary teacher would perchance have despaired of winning the ear of the excited spectators. Jesus, however, with His keen eye for symbols, saw that this popular ceremony might furnish a text for one of His heart-searching appeals. Just as the priest had poured out the water from the golden pitcher at the foot of the altar (so at least we may suppose), Jesus stood forth and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

The words presuppose that the people were accustomed to symbolism like this. And certain it is that many of those who heard them at once began to question whether this might not be the prophet who was to come in the latter days, or even the Messiah himself. I should not wonder if the idea was suggested to them by a passage from a prophetic hymn in Isaiah which was inserted in the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles: "*In that day*" (*i.e.* probably in the Messianic age) "*ye shall draw water with*

*joy out of the wells of salvation.*"<sup>1</sup> Nor was the idea of spiritual thirst unexpressed in that complete devotional manual of the Jewish Church, the Psalter. Let us therefore connect our Lord's words with the first verse of the 63rd Psalm, than which few of the temple-songs are more beautiful, or better reward a repeated study. This "prayer without a petition," as it has been called, has been a favourite with devout minds in all ages; and if we no longer use it, with St. Athanasius, as a morning hymn—for the experiences of the author were perhaps too uncommon to justify this—we may at least treasure it up as a precious jewel, to be taken out and contemplated in our deepest and most sacred moments.

Let me first tell the story of the psalmist, which the trained eye can recover in some of its details from his own work, illustrated by a neighbouring psalm. He is one of those faithful Jews whose allegiance both to their heavenly and to their earthly king, no temporary reverses can shake. He has probably, though but a temple-singer, accompanied the royal army, which is still battling for religious and political independence. Not long ago (if the 60th Psalm belongs to the same period) Jehovah "caused his people to see hard things, and made them to drink the wine of bewilderment." They had taken the field for the true religion; Jehovah had, as it seemed, raised their banner, but it was only that they might flee before the bow.<sup>2</sup> And though some improvement in their fortunes has taken place, yet how can they pray with their wonted confidence that God will answer? Were they at home, they would go up, like Hezekiah, to the house of Jehovah, and spread the matter before the Lord. But here, in the wilderness, how can they open their parched lips save to cry aloud, and lament their distance from the God of their salvation? "*From the end of the earth,*" says one of them, "*I call unto*

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lx. 3, 4 (see Ewald).

*thee with fainting heart*";<sup>1</sup> and another, "*My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh pineth for thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is.*" It is not that they are incapable of braving physical hardships, not that they cannot stand long marches or endure the pains of thirst. "The end of the earth," "a dry and weary land,"—these are symbols of spiritual privations which are harder to bear than any physical ones. The speakers may, likely enough, be in a remote part of the country, and the time may be close upon midsummer, when, except in the mountains, the soil is dried up, and its deep cracks seem to gape wearily for the showers which come not. But what the sufferers miss the most is the sense of nearness to God. They long, as the second verse says, to see God's power and glory (by transposing its two clauses in the Bible version we shall see the meaning better), even as in time past they have, in some sense, gazed upon Him in the sanctuary. They have been wont to look through the forms of the ritual to the Face which shines behind them, and in so doing they have had soul-satisfying impressions of God's power and glory. They are now deprived of this privilege; but they can at least complain of their misery, and pant like the hunted gazelle to slake their thirst at the living waters.<sup>2</sup> They have not ceased for one moment to appropriate their share in the common Father. They can still pray, "O God, thou art my God"; and if they seem separated from Him, they will still obey His gracious command, "Seek ye my face." And, lo, the answer to this "prayer without a petition" is on its way. They wish themselves back in the sanctuary. But God will teach them how to dispense even with this most sacred means of grace. The ages are rolling on; Christ is nearer now than when David said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within tent-curtains."<sup>3</sup> It is time that

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ps. xlii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 2.

men should cease to think that the presence of God can be confined in any sense, either to a tent or a house of stone. But how gently does the guiding Spirit lift Israel up to a higher point of view! A far-seeing prophet has already cried, "What manner of house will ye build unto me (*i.e.* unto Jehovah)? and what place shall be my rest?"<sup>1</sup> This was too paradoxical for the Church at large to realize. But even ordinary believers might see that, though the temple-services were the highest means of grace, yet, when they were parted from them, there were compensations to be had from an all-sufficient God. And it was this that Jehovah taught His Church through a succession of psalmists after the return from the Captivity. Other temple-poets preceded our psalmist, who seems to have lived in the times of the Maccabæan princes.<sup>2</sup> But God's lessons need to be repeated to the Church again and again; and there were doubtless reasons why the lesson should be renewed in the time of the psalmist, who was rewarded for his thirst after God by a special outpouring of the Spirit—not for his own sake alone, but for that of the Church.

How long he waited for it, we know not. It is possible that the two first verses are but a condensed record of a painful experience, such as occupies many verses in the 42nd and 43rd Psalms.<sup>3</sup> But it is also possible that this psalmist had but a short time to wait before his unspoken petition was abundantly granted. God selects His instruments with a view to their special work. The authors of

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxvi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> This is not the place to justify the date here given for one of the most difficult of the psalms. Without some provisional date, the psalm would lose much of its force and beauty. Those who will, may follow Delitzsch, who thinks that "the king" spoken of and the psalmist are one and the same person, *viz.* David. At any rate, I hope I have done something to show that no modification of critical opinion can impair either the poetical or the spiritual value of the Hebrew psalms.

<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt but that these originally formed but one psalm (see Delitzsch).

the 42nd and the 63rd psalms were both lyric poets, but the former was of a still more sensitive, and therefore still more poetic, nature than the latter. His mission was to describe with inimitable truth and beauty the pain of unsatisfied aspiration. That of his brother-poet was to contrast the agony of spiritual longing with the joy of recovered communion with God. Psalm xlii. rises no higher than a confident expectation of a return to mount Zion; but in Psalm lxiii., as it has come down to us, we pass at once from the complaint of the thirsting to the anthem of the refreshed and rejoicing soul. The author of Psalm xlii. is great in remembering; he "pours out his soul" in a sad retrospect; but our psalmist knows that there is a time to remember and also a time to forget. He forgets for a time all that is painful in his situation, and remembers only what God is permanently and essentially. From this great source of comfort he draws the assurance that God's countenance is not really veiled, and that he can still praise God as joyfully as in the temple-choir; and when he does remember the difficulties of his situation, he turns the thought, in the power of the new assurance which has come to him, into a prophecy of the destruction of his heathen enemies.

But it is not upon the latter part of the psalm that I would now dwell. I have already excused the bitterness which mars some of the Maccabæan psalms. It is the course taken by this thoroughly human-hearted poet to which I desire to draw attention. He rises from the thought that God is love (the thought is his, though not the very words) to the denial (implied, though not expressed) that his communion with God can be vitally affected by his absence from the temple. Love knows no barriers—least of all the Divine love. Hints have already been given of a catholic Church of all nations. How should any of its worshippers—above all, Israelitish ones—be debarred from

the fullest spiritual privileges by the accident of their habitation? What, then, can the psalmist have lost but a symbol of Jehovah's presence among His people which He who has for a time withdrawn it will not suffer him to miss? The psalmist has indeed missed it for a moment; but when he thinks of God's eternal love, he passes into a stage of experience which is independent of forms, because that which alone makes forms desirable has been obtained without them—the inward vision of God. Nay, has he not, here in the wilderness, had specially strong proofs of that which could not be learned so well in the temple—the Divine lovingkindness? No doubt the pious worshipper drank in the sense of God's love in the temple; but there was a certain awfulness attached by long association to the place where the ark<sup>1</sup> had been, which may have weakened the impression of the Divine love. The psalmist himself tells us that God's power and glory were what he had chiefly beheld in the temple services, and from the psalm which precedes this we gather that the truth of God's essential lovingkindness was, even after the return, less generally recognised in the Church than that of His absolute power.<sup>2</sup> Should not the psalmist then acquiesce in a temporary loss, without which he could not so effectually have learned that God's lovingkindness followed him all his days, and that in the highest and fullest sense he could dwell in the house of the Lord for ever? Well may he say,

*“ My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,  
And my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips.”*

Yes; it was worth while to sojourn in a thirsty land to receive such showers of blessing from the Lord of life. If God's lovingkindness is better than life itself, much more must it be better than any of those symbolic services from which the psalmist is at present parted, and to which he will return with so deep a knowledge of the truth which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 60, cxxxii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Ps. lxii. 11, 12.

they symbolize? This pious man felt as if he had, not indeed lost his God, but been deprived of the privilege of immediate access to Him. He must indeed have known better than this, for psalmists before his time had at any rate suggested a doctrine on ritual almost Christian in its spirituality. But trouble had brought a film over his eye, and he could not see the new and but half assimilated truth. Hence his restless discontent. For "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart remains restless until it find rest in Thee." The most sacred forms do us harm if they step between us and the supreme object of devotion. It is well to be parted from them—it is well even to part ourselves from them—for a time, that we may the better realize the directness of the soul's relation to God and the inexhaustible riches of His grace. For, alas! there is such a thing as a merely formal and notional religion. Too many ritual forms are as dangerous as too many sermons. Forms and sermons are only useful to those who come to them with an unappeasable longing to get that which by nature we cannot have—filial intercourse with God. The essential is, neither to be a ritualist nor a non-ritualist, neither to hear many nor to hear few sermons, but to hunger and thirst after God. And nothing can satisfy this noble craving but experience.

And now I can return to the glorious saying of Jesus on the last day of the feast. The historical fact, that on the scene of history, once in the ages a Divine Man has appeared is a far greater proof than any which the psalmists possessed of the inconceivable love of God. They knew indeed that even greater wonders than any in the past were in store for Israel and the world in the latter days; but they could not guess what form Jehovah's creative originality would select. Moreover they knew and loved Jeremiah's great prophecy of the new covenant; but they could not divine how the promised blessings of forgiveness and regeneration

would be conveyed to thirsting souls. We, more fortunate, do know. We have it all at our fingers' ends. But do we really know it? Why then do we not live more in accordance with these blessed truths? Were it not best to forget our poor, ineffectual, fancied knowledge, and once more become learners in the school of Jesus and His apostles? It is too often our fatal familiarity with modern religious phrases which hinders us from getting to the root of religious truth. The best remedy for educated persons is the historical and yet devotional study of the Scriptures, and more especially of the gospels. I cannot be too earnest in impressing this: the life of Christ, historically studied, is at once the best evidence of Christianity and the unfailling source of new impulses to repentance and faith. Follow Jesus as He moves about, healing bodies and souls, in the narrow streets of Eastern towns and villages; follow Him from the manger to the cross and to the opening tomb. Believe that He was not less the Son of man because He claimed to be the Son of God, and that what He was 1800 years ago He still is.

“What if Thy form we cannot see?  
We know and feel that Thou art here.”

Come to Him when He calls the weary and heavy-laden to His side—if at least you feel yourself to belong to this class. Come to Him when He says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”—if at least you feel that the words “any man” cover your own case; for how should you open your lips to drink, if you are not athirst? True life, which in that Eastern book the Bible is compared to sweet, fresh water, consists in likeness to God. If you do not thirst for this God-likeness, which consists in “doing always those things that please” God, how should you drink of the lifegiving water which the Son of God brings?

“Ye believe in God,” said Jesus, “believe also in me.”



The psalmists *did* believe in God; they thirsted for new life, and so God gave it them—how, they knew not, save that it was through His abundant lovingkindness, and that it was the first-fruits of the new covenant of Jeremiah's prophecy. And if we believe in God as they did, and cry to Him as they did, "O God, thou art my God: teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee," He will assuredly respond to us as He did to the holy psalmists, and still more clearly to His own first disciples. The great want, both of the world and of the Church, is this—to believe more earnestly in God. It would be untrue to say that we do not believe at all. Faith is not dead, but sleepeth. We do believe, but intermittently. We do in our best moments wish to please God, but we do not give thought enough to the manifold difficulties which hinder the accomplishment of the wish. We do not draw upon the magnificent resources so freely placed at our disposal—resources of "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We have faith, but not that which worketh, which energizeth, by love. If we had—if, for instance, in those social and religious difficulties which so strikingly characterize our times, we leaned more constantly and avowedly on the help of the Divine Spirit of wisdom, would there have been such disputes between capital and labour as those which so lately saddened the bright summer weather? and would such important sections of our population be in part or altogether alienated from the Christian Church?

Let us then put more earnestness into our religious life. When we have time to think our own deepest thoughts, we do crave for that which is far better than all earthly excitement—the joy of the experience of Christ's love. When the world leaves us free, and the outer noises are still, our heart does throb in response to the psalmist's cry, "O God, thou art my God, earnestly do I seek thee."

Let us then dare to be ourselves more constantly, and make it our one ambition (as St. Paul says<sup>1</sup>) to be well-pleasing unto Christ. No difficulties need be too great for us; "for of his fulness," says even St. John, "have all we received, and grace for grace." Let us not consider ourselves excused for the weakness of our spiritual pulse by the demands of business. It is possible to hallow those dry details which no hard worker can escape by the thought that we are placed where we are for a moral purpose by the holy will of God.

"There are in this loud stunning tide  
 Of human care and crime  
 With whom the melodies abide  
 Of the everlasting chime;  
 Who carry music in their heart  
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
 Plying their daily task with busier feet,  
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."<sup>2</sup>

Would you know this holy strain? The psalmists can give you the words, but the music must come from within your soul. "Sing unto the Lord a new song"; for when has the experience of two souls been altogether alike? We are born into the world of nature alone, and alone we are born into the world of grace. Special mercies need special gratitude. The music of the soul is like the "new name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." My God must "open my lips," and give me the new song, before my tongue can rightly "show forth his praise."

And what is it that cheers the tired worker when the melodies of the holy strain sound faintly within him? This simple thought: that in heaven his thirst after goodness and righteousness, and after Him who is their living image, will be filled. "Thy lovingkindness," said the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 9 (Rev. Ver., margin).

<sup>2</sup> Keble, *Christian Year*: "St. Matthew the Apostle."

psalmist, "is better than life itself": of course, for life at its best is but an imperfectly transparent veil, on the other side of which "just men made perfect" have an immediate perception of the glory of God in Christ. Strictly speaking, indeed, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing," even in heaven. Aspiration will still be the glory of those who have been born into the better life. But the thirst of heaven will have no trace of pain in it. It will be simply the sense that for ages upon ages we shall still be able to make fresh discoveries of the greatness and goodness of our King, and of the beauty and wisdom of His works. We shall only thirst because the "wells of salvation" are too deep to exhaust, because that Feast of Tabernacles will never come to an end. But our thirst will not check the stream of our melody. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."<sup>1</sup>

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## NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

### IV. THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

IN this paper I shall endeavour to reproduce the teaching of the Fourth Gospel about the fate of those who reject the salvation offered by Christ.

In John iii. 16 we meet again, as a description of that from which God gave Christ to save men, St. Paul's technical and favourite term, *destroyed* or *lost*: "That every one who believeth in Him may not be *destroyed*, but may

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxv. 10.