

CHRIST IN THE PSALMS.

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THE Psalms are eminently evangelical. Christ in his birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and glory, is the sum and substance of most of them, if not all. Many of them have a double sense, a literal and an evangelical, whilst many others apply exclusively to Christ, or to David as a type of the Messiah.

I. Many of the Psalms have a double sense, a literal and an evangelical, and, in order that we may sing with understanding, we must view them in the light of the gospel, or in the evangelical sense. The 8th Psalm is one of this class. In its literal sense, it celebrates the goodness of God to man, as displayed in the works of creation and providence, alluding to the first Adam, who was invested with dominion over the inferior animals, and thus made lord of the terrestrial creation (Compare vv. 5-8, with Gen. 1:28). But the first Adam was a type of the second (1 Cor. 15: 45-49), and we are assured, on apostolic authority, that the Psalm, in its evangelical sense, applies to the "second Adam, the Lord from heaven," to "Jesus, who was made a little while inferior to the angels; but is now crowned with glory and honor," and "set over the works of his Father's hands." Heb. 11: 6-9.

The 19th Psalm furnishes us with a beautiful example of the same kind. In its literal sense, it describes the natural sun in the firmament, as "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," diffusing light, and heat, and life, and joy to all; and thus proclaiming to men of every language, the glory of the invisible God. But the natural sun is the emblem of the "sun of righteousness," who has arisen upon us "with healing in his wings." The Apostle therefore applies this Psalm, in its evangelical sense, to Jesus, who is the "great light" of the moral world, revealing the character of God to man by the preaching and writings of the Apostles, whose "sound went unto all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." Compare ver. 4, with Rom. 10:18. This is a general principle on which many of the Psalms ought to be explained.

II. Many of the Psalms apply exclusively to Christ, or to David only as a type of the Messiah. Such Psalms are generally constructed on the principle that Jesus is not only the subject, but also the speaker. The royal prophet personates the Messiah, and speaks in his name. This is evident, because some of them cannot be applied with propriety to any but the Redeemer, and others are quoted in the New Testament, and not only applied to him, but put into his mouth, *i. e.*, he is represented as the person giving utterance to them.

1. Some of the Psalms cannot be applied with propriety to any but the Redeemer. Who, for example, but he who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," could say: "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; *thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing.*" Ps. 17:3. Who but he whose soul returned from the separate state, and whose incorruptible body was raised from the grave, could say, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the invisible world, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Ps. 16: 10. Such language is altogether inapplicable to David; "for David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto

his fathers, and *saw* corruption; but he whom God raised from the dead, saw *no* corruption." Acts 13:35-36. Who but he who "upholdeth all things by the word of his power," could say, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved. *I bear up the pillars of it.*" Ps. 75:3. This language may well be used by him, to whom "all power in heaven and in earth" is given; but is altogether unsuitable for any creature, however exalted. Yet, Dr. Watts, who complains that the Psalms are not sufficiently evangelical to be used under the gospel dispensation, and takes it upon him to cast them into a more evangelical mould, applies these striking words to "*the glorious revolution by King William, 1688!!*" Did the Spirit of God ever intend such an application? Without deducting from the merits of reformers, either in church or state, we think it a grand error to accommodate the praises of Immanuel to the achievements of a mortal man—to celebrate the praises of King William and his "glorious revolution" in the inspired words which were designed to celebrate the praises of him who "bears up the pillars of the earth," and whose "kingdom ruleth over all." In these words we celebrate, not the praises of King William, not the praises even of Solomon, but of Christ.

"A wiser king, a greater prince,
Than Solomon is here."

John Barclay, A. M., Minister of the Berean Assembly (a small sect of Scotch dissenters) at Edinburgh, speaks of a certain class of divines in Scotland, who, "after prayers read, and a blessing implored, that they might be enabled suitably to apply and improve," did apply and improve with a vengeance—how suitably, let the world judge! The King—the Lord's anointed—his righteousness—his righteous cause—his glory filling the land—his flourishing crown—righteous sceptre—peace of his government, etc. To whom were all these eulogiums from the Psalms applied? To the Lord, of whom they were meant? No. To David? Nor to him neither. To whom then? To whom but to the "*good King Charles, of blessed memory!*" Others, I doubt not, in their pious zeal, may have applied these eulogiums to his holiness, the Pope. Indeed, if we lose sight of Christ in the Psalms, we shall have applications without end. It is easy to see, however, that these words (Ps. 75: 3) apply only to Christ, and that it would be blasphemy to put them into any mouth but his.

2. Several of the Psalms, which are quoted in the New Testament, are put into the mouth of Jesus; *i. e.*, he is represented as the person giving utterance to them. The 40th Psalm is one of this description. It is evident, indeed, on reading this Psalm, that it is inapplicable to any but Jesus; but, that all doubt may be removed on the subject, the Apostle declares, in direct terms, that "when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God!" Compare Ps. 46:6-8 with Heb. 10:5-7, which words the Apostle thus explains: "Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offerings for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God! he taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" Heb. 10:8-10.

The 22d Psalm furnishes us with another example of the same kind. The Evangelist informs us, that Jesus on the cross uttered the opening words of this Psalm as his own. "About the ninth hour," says the sacred historian, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Compare ver. 1 with Matt. 27: 46. Again, the Psalmist complains thus, in the 7th and 8th verses: "All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." But the manner in which this passage is quoted by the Evangelist, at once shows that Jesus must be regarded as the person uttering this complaint. "They that passed by (the cross) reviled him, *wagging their heads*, and saying, *He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him.*" Matt. 27:39-43. We are not acquainted with any incident in the life of David that would lead him to say, "They pierced my hands and my feet;" but this was literally true of the Redeemer, whose hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Compare ver. 16 with John 10-25. We are also informed that "they parted his garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, in the person of Christ, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." Compare ver. 18 with Matt. 27:35. Paul assures us that it is Christ who says in ver. 22d, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee," Compare ver. 22 with Heb. 2:11, 12. Christ, therefore, must be regarded as the speaker, all throughout this Psalm. It is one of the prayers that he offered up to God, in the days of his flesh. In this Psalm we see the Son of God, as it were, on his knees. We see the "man of sorrows" offering up "prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Heb. 6:7. These Psalms, therefore, must be eminently evangelical; if there be such a thing as spirituality in composition, they must be spiritual in the highest degree, being the utterance of the Redeemer's heart. Some talk of casting the Psalms into an evangelical mould—they may as well speak of baptizing the Holy Ghost. They are sufficiently evangelical in themselves, and we have abundant proof that some paraphrasts, in using evangelical phrases, have lost *the evangelical sense*. New Testament phrases may be used abundantly, and yet Christ und his work not sufficiently seen.

In the Psalms we have a beautiful symbol of the union between Christ and the church. He is represented as singing praises to his Father, in the midst of the church (Ps. 22:22), and thus leading the praises of the redeemed. This is the only principle, indeed, on which they can be intelligently sung by us, for many of the Psalms are only true of us as we are *in Him*. It is on this principle alone that he confesses our sins as his (Ps. 40:12), and that we exult in his righteousness as ours (Ps. 17:3; 24:3). None but Christ can lay an absolute claim to the righteousness which is there described; but the believer, in virtue of union to him, can appropriate that righteousness to himself, for he is fully justified in his representative. God sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, when viewed in his beloved Son. The testimony of Jesus in reference to his church, is, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." "In the Lord we have righteousness and strength." His name is "Jehovah our righteousness." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath *clothed* with the garment of salvation, he hath *covered* me

with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

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