

Psalm-Singers'  
Conference.

Belfast, August, 1902.

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men, of which many inspiring pictures are given to us in the Psalms. It is a kingdom given to Him by the Eternal Father ; and all opposition to it will be overcome. The sceptre that He holds in His pierced hand is one of righteousness and love, and touches the hearts and consciences of men, making them a willing people, and bringing to them the richest blessings. It is a sceptre, the power of which shall yet be felt and owned in every human heart. " His name shall endure for ever."

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### CHRIST IN THE PSALMS—HIS SUFFERINGS.\*

By REV. W. W. BARR, D.D., Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.

It has been objected to the Psalms of the Bible as the exclusive matter of God's praise, that Christ is not in them—at least that He is not set forth in them in His person, offices, and work, as He is in the hymns of human composition in general use in the Churches in these New Testament times. It is not difficult to show that the objection arises out of prejudice, or, at best, arises out of a lack of knowledge of what the Psalms do contain. It is astonishing that any one could read the 2nd Psalm, the 16th, the 18th, the 22nd, the 24th, the 40th, the 45th, the 69th, the 72nd, the 96th, the 98th, the 110th, and others like them, and say that Christ in His incarnation, His life, His person, His sufferings, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His offices and work, the triumphs of His kingdom, His coming again, and His judging the world, is not in the Psalms. Certain it is that He Himself sang the Psalms, and found Himself in them. He quoted from them more frequently than from any other book in the Bible. They seem to have been His hand-book in His daily life. Expounding the things in the Scriptures concerning Himself, He showed that He was in Moses, in the Prophets, and *in the Psalms*. Certain it is, too, that Paul and other Apostles had no difficulty in finding Christ in the Psalms. Bishop Ryle has said that " Christ is undoubtedly to be found in every part of the Law and the Prophets ; but nowhere else is He so much to be found as in the Book of Psalms".

*The Limitation of our Subject.*—But our subject, as assigned, limits us in this discussion to the *sufferings* of Christ as por-

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\* Read by Rev. James Parker, Ph.D., Jersey City, U.S.A.

trayed in the Psalms. Here we have no difficulty in finding Him. In the 2nd Psalm, the 22nd (which has been characterized as "that Psalm of Sobs"), the 69th, and others, we have the Saviour's sufferings set forth in the most minute and specific terms—more minute and specific, indeed, in some particulars than in the Gospels themselves. Some of the declarations in these Psalms are minute prophetic specifications of facts that were to occur, and that did occur precisely as foretold. Other revelations are made in types. In some of the Psalms—as the 16th, the 40th, parts of which are quoted in the New Testament and applied specifically to Christ and His humiliation and sufferings—there seem to be some things that are applicable only to David, or the author of the Psalm. The ready and proper explanation is, that in any case, Christ was viewed as the sufferer, either in Himself directly, or in David, who was mystically united to Him as a part of His body, the Church. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians (1, 24), speaks of filling up, by the afflictions which he was enduring, "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." By this he seems clearly to have meant that in the sufferings of Christ's people now, Christ Himself is suffering in His union with them; and that, in this sense, Christ will continue to suffer until these His sufferings shall have been completed in the sufferings of His body, the Church, the fulness of which suffering has not yet been finished. If Christ is properly said to suffer thus in His Church since He died on the cross, why may He not have been suffering as truly and really in His body, the Church, before His death actually occurred?

In view of this, we may not be specially concerned to determine exactly who speaks in this Psalm or that. In any case, Christ was portrayed as suffering in His own person or in His mystical body. The suffering believer, or the suffering Church, was then filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ, as the suffering Church is now doing the same. I do not know of anything that gives us a more striking conception of the unity of Christ and His Church than this; and viewing the matter in this light, we may hear, in the groaning voice of many a Psalm in which David or other Psalmists appear to speak, the sad voice of the Saviour Himself suffering in His body, the Church. Many a Psalm, thus viewed, portrays for us the suffering Saviour, in which we have been accustomed to see only the suffering Psalmist or the suffering people of God.

*Some Specific Revelations in the Psalms.*—It is not our intention, in what remains to be said in this paper, to dwell

on the sufferings of Christ in general, as delineated in the Psalms. The subject has been so well and so fully discussed by others, that there does not seem to be anything that can be said that would be new or specially interesting. Besides, we are persuaded that no words of man in regard to the sufferings of Christ, as depicted in the Psalms, can be as effective as the words of the Psalms themselves. To be convinced of this, sit down and read alone, for instance, the 22nd Psalm, and think of Christ as He utters the cry on the cross with which the Psalm opens; and listen to, and take into your heart, His words throughout the Psalm, until you hear Him say, as He does in the original, at the close, "It is finished." One hesitates to enter a holy of holies like this with any words of his own. Hence, what we have to say farther in relation to the sufferings of Christ, as we see them in the Psalms, will be in the way of directing attention to a few things in these in which we have revelations which are not, at least distinctly, given in the New Testament.

As one instance, I might mention the piercing of the Saviour's feet in the crucifixion. This fact is not mentioned in the Gospel narratives. It might be implied in crucifixion, but in that the feet were not always pierced. Sometimes they were fastened to the upright beam of the cross by cords. Christ's hands were pierced with nails, and, after His death, His body by the spear of a soldier. No mention is made of His pierced feet in any of the Gospel narratives. After His resurrection, He showed His pierced hands and side to His disciples, and to the unbelieving Thomas, but there is no reference to His pierced feet. So far as the New Testament goes they may, or they may not, have been pierced in the crucifixion. For the certain, definite revelation in regard to this, we have to turn to the 22nd Psalm. There in the 16th verse we have the specific declaration, "They pierced . . . My feet." For the certain knowledge of this we are indebted to the Psalm. This knowledge enhances the horror with which we contemplate the bodily sufferings of our Lord.

*The Saviour's Broken Heart.*—That Jesus died suddenly on the cross the record in the Gospels makes plain. He was on the cross only about six hours. Usually the time in which death occurred by crucifixion was much longer than this, extending from one to two or three days. That the body of Jesus and the bodies of those crucified with Him might not remain on the crosses beyond the day of the crucifixion, means were resorted to for hastening the deaths. Roman soldiers were sent to break the legs of the crucified. They broke the

legs of the two thieves, and were about to do the same with Jesus—but when they came to Him they found that He was already dead. When Joseph of Arimathæa asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, he “marvelled if He were already dead”, and being assured that this was the case, he granted the request.

From all this it is evident that Jesus died before the time on the cross. The quickness of the death was marvellous. It was an exception among the crucified.

How is this to be accounted for? One explanation is, that the Divine compassion pitifully shortened the Saviour's sufferings. This hardly comports with the declaration from His own lips that the Father had forsaken Him, and in other respects it is not satisfactory. Another explanation is that the state of nervous exhaustion was followed by a sudden collapse, as is frequently the case in violent diseases. But this does not seem to be consistent with the fact that, in the act of dying Jesus “cried with a loud voice”. Somewhat similarly it has been said that the sudden death was owing to “mortal fainting, or mere fatal arresting of the action of the heart by syncope”. But the “loud cry” and subsequent exclamations would clearly be inconsistent with fatal fainting or syncope.

Again, the sudden death has been attributed to the wound in the region of the heart inflicted by the Roman soldier's spear. But clearly this is a mistake, for the record makes it plain that the spear-thrust was not made until some time after death had occurred.

None of these explanations being reasonably satisfactory, we must seek for another, if such can be found. We believe that it is given us in two of the Psalms. In the 22nd Psalm and 14th verse, Jesus is presented to us as saying, when He was on the cross, “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels;” and in the 69th Psalm and the 20th verse He is recorded as saying, when in the same condition, that is, on the cross, “Reproach hath broken My heart.” It is readily admitted that these words in these Psalms may be taken figuratively. We are all familiar with the expression, “he died of a broken heart,” when we know that no literal breaking of the heart is meant, but that the meaning is, he died of deep, poignant grief. So when the Saviour said, “Reproach hath broken My heart,” we may fairly understand Him as saying, I am in intense mental grief and suffering. But when we reflect that Jesus said, “Reproach hath broken My heart” in the same connection in which He said, “In My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,” and that He said, “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My

bowels," in the same connection in which He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him," "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture," the question at once arises, If these declarations are to be taken literally, and no one doubts that they are, why should we not take literally the declaration, "Reproach hath broken My heart"?

Are we in doubt whether the words, "Reproach hath broken My heart," are to be taken literally or figuratively? Let us turn to the New Testament and read the record that is given us by the Apostle (John 19, 34), "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His [Jesus'] side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." Here is exactly what takes place when blood has been poured out for a time. It separates into its constituent parts blood-clot and water. This is precisely what has been known to have taken place when the heart has been literally burst or broken. Well authenticated cases have been observed. In instances of extremely violent emotion either there has been bloody sweat exuding from the body, or there has been sudden death by the rupture of the heart, this usually attended with a loud outcry.

The blood in the heart thus broken empties into the pericardium, and after a time separates into its constituent parts, blood and water. When the side of Jesus was pierced by the Roman soldier's lance, and the heart sac was opened, there came from the opening, as the Apostle John saw it, "blood and water." The conclusion seems inevitably to be that Jesus died literally of a broken heart. Surely if any heart was ever ruptured by mental agony, we might say *a priori*, it would be the heart of Him Who, in being made a curse for us, endured, as no other has done, the maledictions of men, and, in penal displeasure, the hidings of His Father's face. This interesting and important revelation that Jesus died literally of a broken heart we have from the Psalms alone. The remarkable incidental confirmation of it we have from the narrative given by the Apostle John.

It should be remarked in this connection that this view of the physical cause of Christ's death gives emphasis to the actual shedding of His blood for the redemption of sinners. The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, attach special importance to the actual shedding of blood. It is expressly said that "without shedding of blood is no remission", and that "the blood of Jesus Christ His [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin".

But according to the usual view of the crucifixion, little

blood was shed. Little, if any, would flow from the piercing of the hands and feet with the nails. But as Dr. Simpson, of Edinburgh, Scotland, has remarked, "This shedding of blood was assuredly done in the fullest possible sense under the view that the immediate cause of His dissolution was rupture of the heart, and the consequent fatal escape of the heart and life blood from the central cistern of the circulation."

And so Christ died for us, as the Psalm tells us, literally of a broken heart. As to the impression which this mode of death should make upon us, Dr. Simpson has remarked, "It has always seemed to my medical mind, at least, that this view of the mode in which death was produced in the human body of Christ intensifies all our thoughts and ideas regarding the immensity of the astounding sacrifice which He made for our sinful race on the cross. Nothing can possibly be more striking and startling than the appalling and terrible passiveness with which God, as man, submitted for our sakes, His incarnate body to all the horrors and tortures of the crucifixion. But our wonderment at the stupendous sacrifice only increases when we reflect that, while thus enduring for our sins the most cruel and agonizing form of corporeal death, He was ultimately 'slain' not by the effects of the anguish of His corporeal frame, but by the effects of the mightier anguish of His mind; the fleshy walls of His heart, like the veil, as it were, in the temple of His human body, becoming rent and riven, as for us He poured out His soul unto death; the 'travail of His soul', in that awful hour, thus standing out as unspeakably bitterer, and more dreadful even than the travail of His body." What an impression it should make upon our minds and hearts that, in being "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities", He Who was thus wounded and bruised died for us literally of a broken heart!

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## DISCUSSION.

Rev. Joseph Corkey, LL.D., Glendermott, Londonderry, Ireland, said—I was glad to hear Mr. Acheson's Paper. We are often told that those who adhere to the exclusive use of the Psalms are old, fossilized individuals, and I was therefore specially pleased with the Paper written by our young friend, the Convener of the Hospitality Committee. Those of