

This is the climax of the Apostle's sequence of thought, the point to which he rises, in which he rests. Alas! how far are we from resting in it, even when we have once gained it. We touch it at times indeed. At times we feel that, through the grace and Spirit of Christ, we need no other than this inward proof that truth is true, or that love is lovable. The truth within us recognizes and welcomes the Truth without us; the love within us responds to the Love above us. We are conscious of a Spirit in us that will guide us into all truth and perfect us in charity. But this bright day soon clouds over, and, once more, we find ourselves in a dark place, needing a guidance beyond our own, and a strength to which we have not attained. Thank God, the lamp still burns in the dark place. And if, so often as we walk in darkness, we use this lamp, if by the light of the prophetic Word we go on our way, picking out step after step, the day will soon return, and the Sun of Righteousness once more arise and shine on our darkened and dejected hearts.

S. COX.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

VERSE 5.

THE inspired writer, having affirmed in the preceding verse that Jesus *has been exalted higher than the angels, and so much higher as he has inherited a more excellent name than they*, proceeds to substantiate his assertion. This he does, not in a severely logical way, with formal syllogisms bristling in a row, but still with profound spiritual sagacity. He

reasons from the Old Testament Scriptures, and mingles skilfully, as he proceeds, embellishment with argument. Led by the unerring instinct of an orator, he marshals felicitously the passages which he quotes, so that they form, as they stretch along to the conclusion of the Chapter, not so much a battle-array of argument, as a triumphal procession of mingled demonstration and illustration.

Beginning with the concluding idea of his affirmation, *he has inherited a more excellent name than they*, he first of all establishes its validity, and then proceeds to authenticate and emphasize the other part of his complex asseveration, which has reference to the transcendent dignity and glory of our Saviour.

Is it true, then, that Jesus *has*, as a matter of fact, *inherited a more excellent name than that of the angels?* It is, says the inspired writer; *for unto which of the angels did he ever say,—*

Thou art my Son ;

This day have I begotten thee ?

The interrogation is, as in so many other cases, equivalent to a strong negation. *Never has it been said by God to any one of the angels,—*

My son art thou,

I this day have begotten thee.

Never, so far at least as statement or hint in 'the volume of the Book' is concerned:—and it is Biblical evidence alone that the writer takes into account. Never, moreover, *could* such language have been employed in its highest and truly normal acceptation; for the begotten Son must be partaker of the very nature of the Father.

In the expression, *said 'he' at any time?* there is no pronoun in the original corresponding to the English '*he*.' Hence J. Cappel would interpret the verb impersonally,—*was it ever said?* Sykes, again, would supplement the expression thus, *did 'the Scripture' ever say?* But both devices put the phraseology to intolerable torture. The natural nominative is just the pronoun representing 'God.' The idea of 'God' was prominent throughout the preceding sentence; and the writer's mind was so full of it, that, instead of pausing to repeat a formal introduction of it, he simply proceeds forward on the unbroken line of his own continuity of thought.

The Old Testament Scripture appealed to is the seventh verse of the second Psalm. And the force of the appeal hinges on the assumption that the words quoted find their highest, if not their only, verification in the relation that subsists between the Divine Father and the Messiah, and thus in the relation that subsists between the Divine Father and Jesus.

Gottlob Paulus, indeed, takes a different view of the writer's conception. He contends, not only that the Divine address had reference to Solomon, and Solomon alone; but also, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews understood the passage so. Why, then, it might be asked, did he quote the words as applicable to Jesus, and as evidence that a more excellent name than belonged to angels was his by right? On the principle, replies Paulus, of reasoning *from the less to the greater*. If even Solomon was God's son, *much more was Jesus*.

This is not, however, satisfactory exegesis, unless we be prepared to maintain that not only Jesus, but

Solomon also, and all others who for any reason are called *sons of God*, are, according to the Letter-writer's theology, higher in the pyramid of universal being than angels. But if that were the case, not only would the expression, *a little lower than the angels* (chap. ii. 9), be inexplicable, the angels themselves would be higher than themselves, for they too are *sons of God* in a sense corresponding to that in which Solomon and other men are sons.

Von Hofmann, like Paulus, does not regard the words of the Psalm as having an intentionally Messianic reference. Still, he does not adopt the idea of Paulus, that the inspired writer reasons *from the less to the greater*. He supposes, on the contrary, that there is nothing at all, in the words, of the nature of a logical appeal. They are not adduced *as evidence*, according to his conception. They are merely grand old words, sanctified and sublime, that lay ready to the writer's hand, wherewith to clothe his own ideas. (*Die angeführten Stellen nicht beweisen sollen dass Christus oder dass Jesus Gottes Sohn ist, noch etwas dergleichen, sondern nur dazu dienen, was der Verfasser mit eigenen Worten sagen könnte, mit Schriftworten auszudrücken.*—SCHRIFTBEWEIS, I. p. 152.)

But this exegesis is as objectionable as that of Paulus; for it was not mere asseveration that was needed by the faltering Hebrews to establish them in the Christian faith. It was evidence. And one indispensable element of the evidence required by them, in their peculiar circumstances, consisted in the integrity of that arch of revelation which combined into a Messianic unity time past and time present.

God had spoken to the fathers through the prophets, and in his utterances had stirred the hopes of the people. These hopes, bending forward, were looking out wistfully for a Deliverer to come. The arch of Messianic revelation was, so to speak, carried half way over. Thus for ages had it stood, a fragment waiting for its complement. And therefore, unless from the abutment that was resting on the professedly complementary Revelation, which consisted of the nature, character, words, and works of Jesus, there sprang backward a precisely corresponding New Testament arc, to complete in symmetry the comprehensive span, there must, the Jew would conclude, be a flaw somewhere. He would further conclude that the flaw could not be found in the Old Testament segment of the arch. With him it would be an axiom, as it was afterward with Augustine, that, *as the Old Testament lies 'patent' in the New, so must the New lie 'latent' in the Old.* Thus Old Testament *evidence* was required for the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

And, as a matter of fact, it is given. The inspired writer does not merely assert; he reasons. Hence the reason-rendering particle that stands at the commencement of this 5th verse: '*For*' to which of the angels did he ever say? &c.

Are we, then, to regard the second Psalm as being, in the estimation of the inspired writer, a Messianic composition? Are we to accept the quoted address of the 7th verse of the Psalm as having, according to his belief, an intentional reference to the Messiah? If so, is his belief to be regarded as intrinsically reasonable? Or, should

it be looked upon as a Rabbinical prejudice? Is it a belief, or is it not, which is in harmony with the possibilities and probabilities of literary activity during the Psalm-epoch of the Old Testament Dispensation?

These are questions that have for long exercised the minds of Bible-students, and never more earnestly than at the present day. Very weighty interests are at stake; and hence reverence, candour, patient research, and comprehensive consideration are called for.

We cannot hesitate to confess to the twofold conviction, (1) that the Psalm was regarded by the Letter-writer as Messianic, and (2) that his view of its import is intrinsically reasonable and right.

There are various considerations that render it probable that the Psalm *would be regarded* by the Letter-writer as Messianic. (1) Several of the most eminent of the modern Jewish Rabbis, while themselves opposing, on the ground of expediency, the Messianic interpretation, expressly admit that it prevailed among the ancient Rabbis. (*See, among many others, SCHÖTTGEN'S "Jesus der Wahre Messias," pp. 418-423.*) (2) This interpretation must certainly have prevailed among those very ancient Rabbis who shaped the opinions that were current in Jewish society during the career of our Lord. When the High Priest adjured our Saviour by the living God to tell "whether he was *the Christ, the Son of God*," he intended to refer to the most distinctive designations of the expected Messiah. But both of the designations, which he particularized, were borrowed from this Psalm. Then (3), the Apostles, whose understandings had been

opened by their risen Lord, "that they might understand *the Scriptures*" (Luke xxiv. 45), expressly quoted to one another, in a crisis-time of mutual congratulation (Acts iv. 24-28,) part of the first strophe of the Psalm as having been verified in the experience of our Lord. And (4) the Apostle Paul saw in the words, *My son art thou, I this day have begotten thee*, a representation that was equivalent to a "promise" that a Divine Saviour would, in due time, make his appearance on our earth. (Acts xiii. 32, 33.) He reasoned to that effect in the Jewish Synagogue at Antioch. Then (5) there are several references in the Book of Revelation (see chaps. ii. 27; xii. 5; xix. 15) to the retributive representations in the third strophe of the Psalm. And in these references it is *the 'iron rod' of the Messiah* that is particularized.

The Messianic meaning of the Psalm seems thus to have been, during the first century of the Christian era, assumed or conceded by all parties among the Jews. And therefore it is quite probable that it would be one of the cherished beliefs of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is more than probable. It is certain. He quotes the Psalm as *evidence that 'Jesus' had inherited a more excellent name than the angels*. And as in thus quoting it, he is, as we have just seen, far from affecting literary singularity, it follows that, even if there might have been scope for doubt regarding his deliberate conviction, had his quotation been a *solitary* application of the Psalm to the Messiah, the case is now entirely different. He is just one of a great company, inclusive of all the Apostles and

their compeers, all the cotemporary Rabbis and their disciples, and, indeed, all the Hebrew people of that age. In truth, if the inspired writer had not found the Messiah in the Psalm, *he would have been most singular in his interpretation.*

The Messianic interpretation, moreover, is intrinsically reasonable and right. Not indeed in all the phases which it has assumed under the plastic manipulations of successive generations of interpreters. That need not be imagined. Neither need prominence be now given to the immaturest and most artificial of inspiration-theories. It need not be supposed that the Psalm was, in some semi-mechanical fashion, shot through the mind of the Psalmist, as through a tube, and dropped ready-made into his hands. Surely we may take a different view, and interweave the ideas of Divine afflatus and human elaboration.

There *is a via media.* And, manifestly, there *is* some golden thread or other of Messianic reference running through the texture of the entire Old Testament.

Gustav Baur, indeed, in his fifth edition of de Wette's *Commentary on the Psalms*, intensifies de Wette's notion of 'historical interpretation,' and affirms that "Messianic references, in the strictest sense of the expression, are not to be found in the Psalms, not even in a single instance." He means by "Messianic references in the strictest sense," *statements which the writer himself intentionally applied, not to any actual king, but exclusively and directly to the ideal Messiah, or to Jesus Christ.* (BEMERKUNGEN, viii. pp. 81, 82.)

This theory, manifestly 'ultra' though it be, does not exclude Messianic references of a germinal and

typical description. But in what it does exclude, it imposes limits, in a manner that is entirely arbitrary, on the Hebrew Psalmists. Doubtless there must have been conditions—not only such as are common to generic humanity, but also such as were peculiar to their particular time and circumstances—which bounded the range of their ideal conceptions. It should be readily admitted, for instance, that the representations in the Psalms of the royalty of the Messiah, were cast from the moulds of the existing royalty of David, or Solomon, or some other conspicuous monarch of the Davidic line. Whatever was glorious in these kings, or in their kingdom, would furnish scaffolding for the conception and representation of the peerless glory of the ideal King and his ideal kingdom. When wars, too, were actually waged; and when disloyalty and revolt were actually nipped in the bud, or else, when maturer, were actually punished with an overflow of desolation; all such events would contribute their shadows and shapes to give form to the conceptions in which were depicted the wilfulness, recklessness, thanklessness, folly, and doom of the enemies of the ideal King.

It should likewise be admitted, that, as the prophets themselves who prophesied of the grace that should come, “inquired and searched diligently what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify” (1 Pet. i. 11), so there might be, and would be, many premature anticipations; and, founded on these, there might be immature features of representation.

Nevertheless, it is entirely arbitrary to assume

that no Psalmist ever could, or ever would, conceive and work out a designedly Messianic Psalm. Why, even on the most meagre theory of inspiration, should such a limited idealism be postulated? Why should such a Psalm be deemed incredible? Who has a right to say that the wings of the Psalmic bards were so feeble that they could never soar into the empyrean of the purely ideal future?

We look upon the Second Psalm as intentionally and ideally Messianic. The rapt poet, while meditating on some actual eruption of the spirit of revolt among the peoples who had been subjugated by the armies of King David (*comp.* 2 Sam. viii. 1-14), felt his spirit stirring with unwonted emotion, and by-and-by winging its flight into an ideal region. Not David alone was liable to the vicissitudes of political restlessness and insubordination. It was not wonderful that he, with all his private and public imperfections, should meet with difficulties of opposition and ingratitude. Would it be otherwise when the ideal King appeared? Or, would even He have to meet with similar difficulties? Is sin so infatuating? Are sinners so unreasonable? A vision, dark and lurid, passed before the eye of the seer. Nevertheless, all the mad machinations of the restless and reckless will be baffled. The throne of the King of kings will be established. The persistently rebellious shall be swept away with "the besom of destruction."

Such is the purport of the Psalm. Ewald justly says of it, that in "elegance and polish" it excels all the other Psalms in the Psalter. But he is of opinion—as are likewise Hupfeld and Delitzsch—that David was not the writer. "The colouring of the

language is different ; the flow of thought is easier and more symmetrical ; the *tout ensemble* of form is more polished." (*Die Dichter des Alten Bundes*, 2 h. p. 74.) We venture to differ. When the Apostles expressly speak of David as the writer (Acts iv. 25), we should only in the last extremity have recourse to the idea that they merely echoed the popular assumption. Is it not more likely that they echoed the language in which their Lord had spoken ? And the very fact that the Psalm is placed first, after the introductory one, in that subdivision of the Psalter (i.-xli.) which is emphatically Davidic, is probable evidence that the Collector regarded it as David's own, and perhaps also as David's masterpiece.

If so, then it would be David's own experience of insubordination and revolt that would furnish the 'occasioning cause' of his Messianic musing. Nothing is more natural. And the address of the Divine Father to the peerless King, quoted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, would be wrought into its idealized form, out of the material furnished to David, when God, through Nathan, said in reference to his successor, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever : I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam. vii. 13, 14). King David's mind, as it seems to us, was the natural mint in which such a Psalm should have been coined. Scarcely could its imagery have been struck from any other die.

In the words of the Divine address, as they stand both in the Letter-writer's Septuagint-Greek, and in the Hebrew original,—

*My Son art thou,
I this day have begotten thee.*

there is emphasis laid, in the first line, on the idea of the Son's sonship. In the second line emphasis is laid, first of all, on the correlative idea of the Divine paternity, and then the chronological origination of the sonship is noted. A particular day is referred to—the day when the filial relation began. Pre-existence, however, is obviously implied; for, on the very day when the Son was begotten, he was addressed by the Father. A glorious halo of Divinity thus surrounds the entire representation. J. MORISON.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

ST. MATTHEW v.—vii.

III. The Originality of the Sermon.

WE have already seen that the Sermon on the Mount has a theme which is logically developed, thought rising out of thought, one saying suggesting another; that it does not consist of a collection of detached and unconnected maxims, but that it runs through the successive stages of a single argument, is pervaded and dominated by a remarkable unity of thought, and mounts to a noble and impressive close.

We have also seen that in style it is both authoritative and paradoxical; and that Jesus cast the truths He came to teach into the form of paradoxes in order that men might be for ever unable to degrade them into mere rules, in order that they might be compelled to search for the broad general principles which underlie them.

We have now only to consider the *Originality*