

have paused and looked up to heaven, we have seen the Babe, who once lay in a manger, cradled in the sun, and have heard the loud glad voices of the heavenly host pouring over the walls and battlements of the eternal city to greet us with the song, "*Now is come the salvation, and the strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.*"

S. COX.

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

VERSES 10-14.

NOWHERE in Scripture is there such a grouping of quotations, as in this first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is a remarkable constellation, —all the stars of which are brilliant, while yet they differ from one another in size, and hue, and intensity of lustre. The inter-adjustment is strikingly felicitous. There is a fine combination of demonstration—the logical element, with embellishment—the æsthetical; so that the *tout ensemble* issues, to the appreciative reader, not only in a firm conviction of the intelligence, but also in a lively sentiment of the heart. Not only is theology developed and settled; religion is stimulated. And that is just what always ought to be in the handling of things spiritual and evangelical. It is a very special necessity in these days of wide-spread tendency toward scientific culture.

In the seventh, eighth, and ninth verses of the Chapter the writer shews, contrastively, the very

different styles of representation which the Old Testament writers employ when speaking of angels on the one hand, and of the Messiah on the other. The former are but "winds" and "flames of fire,"—fulfilling the behests of the Almighty in an important, but comparatively humble, sphere of creation. But the latter is far other. He is a King. He is God. His throne is established for ever. His administration is the perfection of wisdom and righteousness. His "joy" over the realized results of his rule, in all places of his vast dominion, is, in its height and depth, measurable only by the depth and height of the boundless complacency of the Infinite Father. So very different are the Old Testament representations of the angels and of the Messiah respectively.

The inspired writer proceeds to say, in verses 10-12:—

And

*'Thou in the beginning, O Lord, didst found
the earth:*

And the heavens are thy handiworks.

They shall perish; but thou shalt endure:

And they all, like a garment, shall wax old;

And, as a vesture, shalt thou roll them up,

and they shall be changed.

But thou art the same,

And thy years shall not come to an end.'

The *And*, which stands at the head of this quotation, links it on, in a purely generic and indeterminate manner, to what goes before. The reader is left to particularize, to his own mind,

if he should desire it, the definite relation of the citations.

The passage, thus indefinitely appended to the quotation from the 45th Psalm, is likewise taken from the Psalter. It is found in the 25th, 26th, and 27th verses of the 102nd Psalm. 'But to those Expositors, who have not seized the idea, that, in the fine free-and-easy practical representations of the inspired penman, there is a beautiful blending of embellishment with demonstration, the citation has occasioned the greatest perplexity: and this perplexity has resulted in very violent expedients of exposition.

The difficulty is this:—*There is nothing in the contents of the Psalm to lead us to the conclusion that it is Jesus who is addressed in the cited words.* So far as intrinsic evidence is concerned, there is nothing in the Psalm that is, in any special manner, Messianic. There is reference, indeed, to Jehovah's *mercy*; and that of course, in its antithesis to justice, involves the conception of propitiousness; which propitiousness, in its relation to moral government, involves the idea of propitiation; which propitiation involves the idea of a propitiator. But not only is it by a circuitous process that this reference to Jesus our Saviour has to be reached; the reference, even when reached, scarcely suffices to satisfy the demands of exegesis, if the notion of bare demonstration, without any interblending element of æsthetic embellishment, be insisted on. For, although the idea of a propitiator may, and must, be ultimately involved, wherever there is reference to God's mercy to Zion in particular,

or to his afflicted people in general, still it is only logically involved. And there is no evidence, intrinsic to the Psalm itself, that it is the propitiating Jesus, as distinguished from the propitious or propitiated Jehovah, who is addressed in the words of the citation, and throughout the whole of the Psalm.

Recent expositors of the Psalms and of the Epistle see this clearly, and hence not a few of them, proceeding on the popular conception of the relation of the citation to the Letter-writer's argument, do not hesitate to speak irreverently concerning the relevancy of the logic.

Among these irreverent critics, some,—of high scholarship too, such as Lünemann,¹—maintain that the Letter-writer was “mised” by the word *Lord*,² as occurring in the Septuagint Version of the Psalm. He did not know, they assume, that it stood in that Version to represent the Hebrew *Jehovah*; but he knew well that it was commonly employed by his Christian brethren around him as a designation of our Saviour. Hence his blunder, as they imagine. In his simplicity and ignorance he just took it for granted that it was *the Lord Jesus Christ* of whom the Psalmist sung! It is ‘too bad’! It would be positively shameful, were it not that it is actually ridiculous. For, even supposing,—and we are not disposed to dispute it,—that it was the Septuagint Version alone of which the writer made use, he must, in using it,—provided he had in him any discriminative talent at all,—have noticed that not merely in scores upon scores, but in hundreds on hundreds of instances, the designation is employed

¹ Following in the wake of Böhme and Bleek.

² κύριος.

where there is no possibility of either openly or surreptitiously thrusting in a special reference to the Messiah who was to come.

More reverent critics are driven, notwithstanding their reverence, to extremely straining expedients. Some, such as Pierce and Wettstein, suppose that the passage is relevant, not because it speaks of the Messiah, but because it speaks by implication of the angels, when it speaks of the "heavens," and says of them that "they shall perish." "They shall perish," says Pierce, "as to their dominion and authority." "The heavens," says Wettstein, "that is, the angels, the *celestials*."¹

Others suppose that not one of the quotations, in the entire constellation of passages, is intended to be a proof-text. They are all, it is contended, merely the borrowed garment or garniture of words in which the Letter-writer chooses to express, not the ideas of the Old Testament writers, but his own New Testament conceptions. Of this opinion is von Hofmann.²

Others, such as Stier, conceive that the Psalm is strictly Messianic, *although we could never have divined the fact, had it not been for the quotation in the chapter before us*. They imagine that it is the Messiah, who, as the afflicted one, "pours out," in the body of the Psalm, "his complaint before Jehovah," and to whom the Divine Father turns and speaks in the latter half of verse 24, and thenceforward throughout verses 25-28, which include the verses quoted by the Letter-writer. In support of

¹ "οὐρανός, i.e. angeli sive cœlites."

² "Der Schriftbeweis," i. p. 150.

this interpretation, Stier has to assume a corruption of the Hebrew text of verse 23. Thrupp, again, while admitting that the verses quoted, instead of being addressed *to* the Suppliant, are addressed *by* him, in continuation of his address in the preceding context, supposes nevertheless that, to vindicate the relevancy of the citation, we must assume that the address takes a special turn at the 24th verse, and is there and thenceforward directed to the Messiah, although in the entire preceding part of the Psalm it is directed simply to Jehovah as Jehovah.

The Duke of Manchester, after most elaborate research, came substantially to the same opinion, and made the most of it, indeed far too much.¹ So perplexed was he. The judicial and judicious Lawson honestly admits his perplexity, and says: "How these words agree with the scope of the Apostle, so as to prove Christ to be more excellent than the angels, is difficult to understand."²

But there is not the slightest occasion for resorting to straining. The inspired writer has already given his readers abundance of demonstration; and there is floating before his view another demonstrative citation, which he purposes to bring forth before he winds up this preliminary section of his high argument. It is given in the 13th verse. But meanwhile he æsthetically intercalates, so to speak, as truly and strictly applicable to our

¹ See his "Horæ Hebraicæ," pp. 99-110.

² See his noble folio, "An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrewes; wherein the Text is cleared, Theopolitica improved, the Socinian Comment examined." 1662.

Lord, the majestic language of the Psalmist in the 102nd Psalm. If he had deemed it requisite to account for the use that he makes of the passage, he might have unfolded his idea in some such manner as the following: *And in truth, since it is the Son, who, as we have seen, is the manifestative effulgence of the Father's glory, and the manifestative impress of the Father's hidden substance; and since consequently it is the Son, who, in manifestation of the Father, acted in the creation of the universe, and still acts in the maintenance of all things by the word of his power; the grand words of the 102nd Psalm are truly and admirably descriptive of his super-angelic glory.* The warrant for the quotation is complete, and all difficulty vanishes when we divest our minds of the stiff artificialities of logic, which we are too apt to bring with us when we come to the unsophisticated representations of Scripture.

Thou at the beginning, O Lord, didst found the earth. The expression *at the beginning* is, more literally, *at (the) beginnings*; for not only may we go back in thought, along the unity of creation, to the beginning of the universe: we may also go back, along the lines of the distinct constituent parts of the great whole, and thus get to numerous objective beginnings. The earth began. The sun began. The stars began.

O Lord: The inspired writer, not being fettered by artificiality in quotation, inserts, out of his own cornucopia, this vocative. The Lord is really addressed, and Christ is really Lord. He is God, and Jehovah too.

Didst found the earth: The earth is æsthetically

regarded as an architectural structure, which needs a very solid foundation on which to rest. The Almighty Builder gives it such a foundation, so that its stability is secured for ages of ages.

And the heavens are thy handiworks: This is the companion clause to the preceding. It is a Hebrew 'parallelism.' *The heavens*: They are spoken of in their plurality, for, at an exceedingly early period, the idea was reached that there is aloft, over our heads, far more than meets our eyes. Were we to ascend to the star-studded firmament that is visible, we should see another star-studded firmament beyond. And why not more, and yet more, if we should continue still to ascend?

Thy handiworks: The builder of the earth is the constructor of the heavens. There is no antagonistic dualism of creators—one below and terrestrial, the other aloft and celestial.

They shall perish, but thou shalt remain: It was a sublime intuition which the Psalmist had into the essential transitoriness of all the constituent parts of the material universe. Change is necessarily going on in earth, sun, moon, and stars. It cannot possibly be avoided where there is motion. Day by day the alteration progresses. Millennium after millennium it advances. The earth is not now what it was millenniums ago. It will not be to-morrow what it was yesterday, or what it is to-day. The sun is radiating itself off, and must by-and-by cease to burn. "It is simply," says Sir William Thomson, "an incandescent mass cooling."¹ Stars have already burnt out, or will. The moon no longer, as of yore, burns and

¹ See his "Geological Dynamics," § 40.

glows. It is now an immense opaque cinder, only reflecting the sunlight that is thrown from afar upon its disc.

They shall perish: *They*, that is, *the heavens*, although what is affirmed of them is equally true of *the earth*, and might have been affirmed of it by the Psalmist. The figures employed, in the succeeding lines shew that his mind was thinking in particular of the heavens, as distinguished from the earth, and from the universe as a whole.

But thou shalt remain: In the majority of critical texts the verb is accentuated as in the present, *thou remainest*.¹ It is better, however, with Pierce, Wettstein, Knapp, Bleek, to accentuate it as future,² in harmony with the verb that goes before and the verb that comes after; in harmony, too, with the so-called future of the original Hebrew. The Vulgate translates it as future.³ Bengel hesitated between the two accentuations; but, in his German version, he decided for the future rendering. *Thou shalt remain*; *Thou shalt survive*; *Thou shalt "continue through,"*—through all the ages of destruction and transformation that may elapse.

And they all, as a garment, shall wax old: The writer still thinks of *the heavens*, which were frequently conceived of as some kind of drapery over-canopying the broad earth.

As a garment shall wax old, and wear out, so as to be no longer serviceable for the purpose for which they are now used.

And as a vesture shall thou roll them up, and they shall be changed: The word rendered *vesture*⁴ denotes

¹ διαμένεις.

² διαμενείς.

³ permanebis.

⁴ περιβόλαιον.

an outer garment for throwing loosely around the person. The writer would be thinking of the Syrian *burnouse*.

Shalt thou roll them up: Doubtless the correct reading,¹ though it has been surrendered by Tischendorf in his last edition. It is certainly not a literal translation of the original Hebrew. And more,—it would not, and could not, be the original form of the Septuagint Version. That would no doubt be the reading, which we find in the Alexandrine manuscript of the Old Testament, and in the Sinaitic and Claromontane manuscripts of the New—the reading in which Tischendorf finally settled—*thou shalt change them.*² The other reading—that represented by the Authorized Version—had crept into some manuscripts of the Septuagint before the time of the Letter-writer. It had been the choice of some transcriber, who, thinking not unlikely of Isa. xxxiv. 4, had either intentionally or unintentionally varied the phrase that lay before him. *Shalt thou roll them up* is, then, the correct reading. When once *the heavens* have ceased to serve their present purpose, they will be dealt with as a robe that is no longer fit for use. Such a robe is often *rolled up* and laid aside, to serve, by-and-by, some other purpose. One particular mode of dealing with cast-off robes is particularized, because the poet is painting concrete pictures, and he leaves it to the common sense of his readers to accept them as only partial representations.

And they shall be changed: The poet does not say, *And they shall be annihilated.* With true intuition he could see that, without annihilation, there

¹ ἐλίξεις.

² ἀλλάξεις.

would be some new cosmical arrangement. There will be *a new heaven and a new earth*. The very materials of the old may be rehabilitated, though that is an idea that does not enter into the Psalmic representation.

But thou art the same, and thy years shall not come to an end: Our Lord is unchangeable in all that is essential to the identity of his being or to the glory of his character. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." *His years shall not come to an end:* they shall not *leave off*,—that is the precise reproduction of the original term.

The halo of glory around the person of our Lord seems to be complete. But the inspired writer lingers as he looks, and adds to it a farther intensification, saying,—*But to which of the angels has he ever said, Sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?* The sacred writer recalls himself, as it were, from the profusion of illustration, in which he had been,—to the great delight and profit of his readers,—expatiating with such enthusiasm. And he proceeds to wind up his connected series of quotations with one of peculiar logical potency.

But:—It is as if he had said, *But to recur to demonstration, I shall add, out of the fulness at command, yet one more proof-text in support of my position.* Then he proceeds to ask,—*To which of the angels has the Divine Father ever rendered the honour which he conferred on the Son, when he said, Sit thou at my right hand?*

The quotation is made from the first verse of the

110th Psalm, and is no mere embellishing illustration. The Psalm is manifestly Messianic.¹ It must be, if any Old Testament oracle is. Not only is it expressly applied to the Messiah by our Saviour himself (Matt. xxii. 42-45; Mark xii. 35-37; Luke xx. 41-44), it is inapplicable to any other personage. In the New Testament it is quoted, as having reference to our Lord, more frequently than any other passage contained in the entire Old Testament scriptures. The words, moreover, which are cited in the verse before us, *Sit at my right hand*, are the mould of all those numerous New Testament representations of our Lord's exaltation, which depict Him as now enthroned in glory, at the right hand of the Majesty, waiting for "the time of the restitution of all things."

The Psalm is a companion one to the second, —though it is by no means so æsthetically constructed. There is more abruptness and, as it were, brokenness in its contents, and less of literary balance in the relation of part to part. It is, too, still more condensed. It is a Psalm of apophthegms. The jointings, that link them into lyric unity, lie under the surface.

Like the second Psalm, the 110th was doubtless composed by King David, and with his eye reverted to the great promise which had been made to him through Nathan,—the promise that he should have a Son, the throne of whose kingdom would be established for ever (2 Sam. vii.). In the second Psalm he embodied his vision of the universality

¹ See Bergman's admirable and exhaustive Monograph on the Psalm.

of his Son's dominion. No reluctance on the part of kings or peoples could hinder this glorious result. It had been assured; and opposition on the part of the unwilling would but issue in their discomfiture and ruin.

It was doubtless at a later stage of the Psalmist's prophetic development that he composed his 110th Psalm. He still, in vision, anticipated opposition on the part of princes and peoples. But he saw, more clearly than before, the surpassing exaltation of his Son, and the active agency of the Divine Father in working with him and for him, till all opposition should be put down. He also saw, probably for the first time, that his Son was to be more than simply King of kings. He was to be Priest of priests, a great High Priest, a Priest upon his throne, whose great aim it would be to intercede in behalf of the sinful, and to consecrate and sanctify the peoples who were willing to be subject to his rule. It was a glorious vision, the full significance of which would only gradually dawn upon the prophet's mind and upon the minds of subsequent prophets, poets, thinkers, and other inquirers.

To which of the angels has he ever said, Sit at my right hand? To none of the angels did God ever thus speak. To none of them could he ever give such an invitation. No one of them was capable, or could ever become capable, of being exalted to such a pre-eminence of glory. Mere creatures cannot be lifted to a level with the Creator. But Jesus is exalted to that level, in virtue of being, in his own personality, even when veiled with humanity, truly divine.

Until I shall have made thine enemies thy footstool: A period is indicated by the conjunction *until*: and consequently the likelihood of some important change, then occurring, is sub-indicated. What if it should be fitting, that at the close of the present militant condition of truth and righteousness, there should be a re-appearance of the Exalted One for final judgment and adjustment? When the earth, cleansed through the victories of the Gospel and by the final awards of the Judge and the baptism of fire, is ready to be annexed to heaven, so to speak, what if it should be fitting that its Creator, Sustainer, Restorer, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, should, in his humanity, a terrene thing, descend from his present provisional elevation, and take his place on the throne of his own peculiar glory? (See 1 Cor. xv. 24-28.) But into the lustre of these various divine glories, all of them dazzling with excess of brightness, our eyes cannot discriminatingly penetrate.

I shall have made thine enemies thy footstool: Before the ultimate consummation, and the glorious visible presence of the Exalted One, the battle between good and evil must go on. The earth is the chosen arena. And God, though invisible, is present with the hosts that are contending for truth, for righteousness, for purity, for self-denial, for love. He is present, striving along with them, and mightily working in them, and through them. Every victory is his. And by-and-by the infatuated enmity shall be, everywhere, subdued. The madness of the enemies shall be

broken, so that they will fall in absolute prostration, or bow down in unreserved submission, before the feet of Him, whose right it was, and is, and ever will be, to reign supreme.

Such is the glory, present and prospective, of Jesus. It infinitely transcends all the pinnacles of distinction on which it is possible for angels to alight. For—and such is the conclusion of our theme—are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall inherit salvation? They are “all,” without exception, ministrant spirits. Their duties are ever “liturgical,” never lordly or regal. They render the service of lieges to the Lord of the Universe, and are busied on the footstool, while Jesus sits on the throne. Even when charged with their highest behests, they but help, in some minor respects, the disciples of our Lord. They are sent forth to minister ‘for them;’ that is, *for their benefit*.¹ They minister ‘to’ God. But it is his pleasure that they minister ‘for’ the disciples of his Son. These disciples are even now “heirs of salvation.” But one after another, as their earthly curriculum is completed, they ascend, doubtless under the convoy of angels, and actually “inherit salvation.” Their everlasting bliss is *glorification* in one respect, and *salvation* in another. It is the state in which, being freed from all actual evil, they enjoy all possible good, as far as their ever-expanding capacity admits. Luther’s rendering of the term *salvation*, here and elsewhere, though not so literal

¹ δῖά, with the accusative.

as ours, is singularly interesting and delightful: *seligkeit* somewhat corresponding to our *bliss*. Such is the inheritance of the saints. And as the ministrant spirits ascend and descend, fulfilling their mission, there will be joy among them over the joy of "the blessed,"—joy "in the presence of God."—"The good Lord forgive me," says the good Bishop Hall, "for that, amongst my other offences, I have suffered myself so much to forget, as his divine presence, so the presence of his holy angels." ("The Invisible World," Book I. § 3.)

J. MORISON.

THE EPISTLES TO
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

III.—PERGAMOS. (*Revelation* ii. 12-17.)

IN this instance there seems reason to believe that there is a somewhat closer connection between the outward history of the city and the language in which the Church in that city is described in the Apocalypse than we have found in dealing with the Messages to Ephesus and Smyrna. Something there was which gave it a bad eminence over them and over the other cities that are here grouped with it. More emphatically than any other it was the metropolis and fortress of the powers of evil, the place where "Satan's throne was," and where he himself was thought of, as ruling from that throne, as the strong man armed, resenting and resisting the attack which was now made upon him by One mightier than himself. How it came to be so, that outward history may, in part at least, explain.