

METHODIST REVIEW.

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ART. I.—THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS.*

THE Book of Psalms has been cherished as a manual of devotion by the pious in all ages. True, it stands upon the plane of the Old Testament, and never transcends the preparatory dispensation to which it belongs. The Gospel of Christ has shed a clearer light upon the scheme of redemption, the afflictions of God's children, and the future glory, than the psalmists ever possessed. Nevertheless, their devout meditations upon divine things, their fervent breathings after communion with God, their confidence in him alike in trouble and in joy, their penitent confessions and earnest supplications, accord so entirely with the inmost experiences of the Christian heart as to show that true religion, in its essence, is the same in both dispensations.

The devotional value of the Psalter is not materially affected by critical questions respecting the age and authorship of these sacred lyrics. The religious profit which they yield grows out of the truth which they contain and the spirit which they breathe, irrespective of their origin or of the special circumstances by which they were suggested. Yet these are by no means a matter of idle curiosity. As the psalm must, in a measure, reflect the person of its author and the situation in which it had its birth, an acquaintance with the latter must conduce to the better understanding of the psalm, and the study of the psalm help to a better appreciation of both the writer and his times. Accordingly, if the date and authors of any of

* We welcome so eminent a scholar as Professor Green to the pages of the *Review*. His is the fourth article in our series on Old Testament books.—EDITOR.

the psalms can be certainly fixed, valuable light will be thrown upon the religious ideas and the religious life of the period to which they belong, and thus upon the history of the religion of the Old Testament in general.

The reputed authors of one hundred psalms are named in their titles, and some of these state the particular occasion on which they were composed. It hence becomes a question of no small importance, preliminary to the study of the book, Are these titles reliable?

The external evidence in their favor is as strong as could possibly be expected. They have been an integral part of the text as far back as that can be traced. They are prior to the Septuagint, the most ancient of the versions of the Old Testament, to the constitution of the Psalter as a whole, to the formation of the separate books of which it is composed, to that collection which antedates the oldest of these books, and is the most ancient of which we have any knowledge, the so-called "Prayers of David," Psa. lxxii, 20, the hymn-book of Solomon's temple. So far as the external evidence goes or the analogy of other Old Testament titles, every thing points to the conclusion that the titles were coeval with the individual psalms to which they are prefixed, or at least with their liturgical use. The evidence derived from this quarter is sufficient to create a strong presumption in favor of their truth and accuracy; so strong, at all events, that their testimony must not be wantonly disregarded, or discredited without valid reasons.

The only further test to which they can be subjected is that of the internal evidence afforded by the psalms themselves. Are the titles consistent with the contents of the psalms to which they are severally prefixed? Do these agree with what is known of their reputed authors, and can they be reasonably supposed to have originated under the circumstances there indicated? If so, the titles are vindicated, and they have a just claim to be believed. It is not necessary, nor is it to be expected, that a positive demonstration of the truth of the titles should be yielded by the psalms. A reasonable measure of correspondence between them and the absence of any contrariety is all that can be demanded, since the liturgical use, for which they were either originally prepared or subsequently adapted, naturally led to the sinking of the individual in what was

common to all devout worshipers, or to some particular class of them.

Psa. xc is entitled a prayer of Moses, the man of God. Delitzsch says: "There is scarcely any literary monument of antiquity which justifies the testimony of tradition as to its origin so splendidly as this." And Bleek: "There is no sufficient reason to deny that this song is from the great lawgiver; and in any case it bears a very decided stamp of antiquity." It is generally admitted, even by those who are most skeptical in regard to the titles, that the psalm is eminently worthy of Moses, and that the situation herein depicted matches precisely that of Israel perishing in the desert, in which they had been condemned to wander for their sin until the entire adult generation was consumed. And that this is really what was before the mind of the writer is confessed even by Dr. Robertson Smith, when he says: * "It can hardly be doubted that this is an example of the habit so common in later Jewish literature of writing in the name of ancient worthies."

"The days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil" (ver. 15), implies a long term of affliction and distress. The mortality common to men is in this case intensified by devastating judgments: "Thou hast swept them away as with a flood" (ver. 5); and is emphasized in a manner unusual in the psalms as the fruit of sin, and the consequence of God's displeasure. "We have been consumed in thine anger. . . . Thou hast set our iniquities before thee." The earnest prayer for the speedy return of God's mercy (vers. 13, 14), and that from the lesson of their frailty they might get a heart of wisdom (ver. 12), is as appropriate as possible, and just what might be expected from Moses. And with equal appropriateness the psalm closes with a hopeful looking forward to new manifestations of God's power, and his blessing on those activities upon which they were about to enter when the fatal term should be over. No other time can be pointed out to which the expressions of this psalm seem so well adapted as that to which it is referred in the title.

And, what is very remarkable, there is a surprising number of coincidences between the language of this psalm and the books of Moses, particularly the song which he taught the people

* *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xx, p. 32.

before his death (Deut. xxxii) and the blessing which he pronounced upon the several tribes (Deut. xxxiii). The Lord is called our dwelling-place (מִעֵן) (ver. 1), as Deut. xxxiii, 27, מִעֵן (Comp. Deut. xxvi, 15 מִעֵן), where it is associated with his eternity, as verse 2. This word is applied to God but twice besides in the Old Testament, Psa. lxxi, 3; xci, 9. "In all generations" (ver. 1) is literally *generation and generation*; so Deut. xxxii, 7. Verse 2, "Or ever thou hadst formed the earth," literally, *gavest birth to the earth*; the expression is used of God but once besides in the Old Testament. Deut. xxxii, 18. "Thou turnest man to destruction" (ver. 3), literally, *causest man to return to dust*, is precisely parallel with Gen. iii, 19, only the noun is not the same, but its poetical equivalent. Verse 4, "A watch in the night;" the same term is used Exod. xiv, 24, implying familiarity with this mode of dividing time. Anger (אָר) and wrath (חֵמָה) are combined (ver. 7) as Gen. xxvii, 44, 45; Deut. ix, 19; xxix, 23, 28; so אָר and עֲבָרָה (ver. 11), as Gen. xlix, 7, representing the same English equivalents.

Verse 7, "We are consumed in thine anger." The same verb, בָּלָה, is similarly used (Exod. xxxii, 10, xxxiii, 3, Num. xvi, 21, 45) of God's consuming Israel in his anger in the wilderness. "Troubled," נִבְהַל, as Exod. xv, 15. "The light of thy countenance" (ver. 8) is a phrase from the sacerdotal blessing (Num. vi, 25). "The days of our years" (ver. 10) is a Pentateuchal phrase (Gen. xxv, 7, xlvii, 8, 9, 28), and occurs but twice besides in the Old Testament (2 Sam. xix, 35, Eccl. vi, 3). The peculiar plural יָמֵינוּ, *days* (ver. 15), is found nowhere else except Deut. xxxii, 7; and a like form, שָׁנֵינוּ, *years*, is common to this psalm (ver. 10) and to Deut. xxxii, 7. The word נִּ (ver. 10), rendered "cut off" in the Authorized Version, and "gone" Revised Version, is only found besides in Num. xi, 31. "Return . . . repent thee concerning thy servants" (ver. 13); just so Moses pleaded (Exod. xxxii, 12-14); and his assured hope is expressed in the same identical phrase, Deut. xxxii, 36. "Satisfy us with thy loving kindness" (ver. 14); the same figure, Deut. xxxiii, 23, "satisfied with favor." "The days wherein thou hast afflicted us" (ver. 15); this same verb, עָנָה, is used of God's leading Israel in the wilderness. Deut. viii, 2, 3. "Thy work," מַעַל (ver. 16), used of the divine agency, as Deut. xxxii, 4; "thy glory," הָדָר, as Deut. xxxiii, 17. "The work of our

hands" (ver. 17, *his*) is a favorite phrase of Deuteronomy (ii, 7, xiv, 29, xvi, 15, etc.) There are four names of God in this psalm: אדני, *Lord* (ver. 1); אל, *God* (ver. 2); יהוה, *Jehovah* (ver. 13), and יהוה אלהינו, *Jehovah our God* (ver. 17)—all of which are familiar in the books of Moses. The reference to the creation (ver. 2) recalls the beginning of Genesis.

These numerous coincidences, some of which are very striking, supply accumulative argument of great force. They cannot have been accidental. Some explain it as intentional imitation. Ewald boldly claims that Deut. xxxii was modeled after the psalm. But the points of contact are too widely scattered through the Pentateuch, and in many instances too subtle, to be the work of an imitator. A more natural and obvious explanation is that they are unpremeditated, and betray the operations of the same mind. Of course, they to whom the Pentateuch is post-Mosaic see in these coincidences no proof that this psalm is from Moses. Wellhausen qualifies Bleek's allegation above cited, that there is no sufficient reason for denying the Mosaic origin of Psa. xc, by adding "for him who regards Moses as the author of Leviticus." But the curious fact remains, that what is traditionally ascribed to the same author has such multiplied indications of community of origin.

The objections urged against the Mosaic authorship of this psalm are of the most trivial description. The only one of seeming plausibility is, that human life is estimated at seventy or eighty years (ver. 10); whereas Moses attained the age of one hundred and twenty (Deut. xxxiv, 7), Aaron one hundred and twenty-three (Num. xxxiii, 39), and Joshua one hundred and ten (Josh. xxiv, 29). But these are plainly exceptional cases. Caleb remarks upon it as extraordinary that he was as strong at eighty-five as he had been at forty. Josh. xiv, 10, 11. And as all who left Egypt over twenty years of age were condemned to perish in the wilderness, the great majority of that generation must have died within the limits here given. Ewald argues that so profound a sense of human frailty could not have arisen at so early a period; but we may well ask, what circumstances can be imagined more adapted to produce it? It has been urged that "O Lord, how long!" (ver. 13) is borrowed from Psa. vi, 4, and "the beauty of Jehovah" (ver. 17) from Psa. xxvii, 4; but the borrowing is the other way. Hitzig ob-

jects that verse 1 calls the Lord our dwelling-place in past generations, whereas the Israelitish nation had just come into being in Moses's days; but the retrospect extends to the time of the patriarchs.

Psa. xviii, according to its title, was spoken by David in grateful memory of the Lord's having delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. This is corroborated by the independent testimony of the Books of Samuel (2 Sam. xxii), which contain other productions of David of acknowledged genuineness, as his lament over Saul (2 Sam. i, 19, *ff.*) and Abner (iii, 33, *f.*), and his last words (xxiii, 1, *f.*). And the internal evidence confirms the title in the most conclusive manner. The author was a warrior (ver. 34), a leader (ver. 37), and a king (ver. 43). Verses 1-19 describe in vivid figures his deliverance from the greatest extremity of peril, or, in literal terms (ver. 17), from his strong enemy and from them that hated him. This deliverance is ascribed wholly to God, and his own agency is not once referred to, corresponding to David's language (2 Sam. iv, 9), "Jehovah, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity." In all this he claims that the Lord rewarded him according to his righteousness (vers. 20-28), saving the afflicted, but bringing down haughty eyes; which implies that he had been the object of unjust persecution by a powerful and haughty foe. The terms employed are almost identical with David's words to Saul (1 Sam. xxvi, 23, 24): "The Lord shall render to every man his righteousness." Comp. 1 Sam. xxiv, 11, 12. Verses 29-45 describe his victories over foes both domestic (vers. 39, 43) and foreign, resulting in a wide-spread dominion and in the submission even of remote nations. Comp. 2 Sam. viii, 9, 10.

All this corresponds exactly with the history of David as of no one else, and, verse 51, the Psalmist explicitly identifies himself with him. This last verse is not a later addition to the psalm, nor a proof that it has been put by some later poet into the mouth of David, perhaps enlarged, as Hupfeld imagined, from a Davidic original. But the introduction of David's own name in words uttered by himself has its parallels in 2 Sam. vii, 20, 26; xxiii, 1; comp. 1 Kings ii, 45. "The Lord's anointed," applied to himself as king of Israel, not only recalls the act of Samuel (1 Sam. xvi, 13), but David's repeated language

respecting King Saul (1 Sam. xxiv, 6, 10; xxvi, 9; 2 Sam. i, 14). God's loving kindness to his seed for evermore (ver. 50) is not an insertion by some loyal adherent to this royal house in some later age, but is based on the promise of God by Nathan (2 Sam. vii, 12, 15, 16), for which David uttered his grateful thanks at the time. "Who is God save Jehovah?" (ver. 31) is closely akin to the words of David, 2 Sam. vii, 22. Jehovah my rock, my strong rock, my stronghold, my high tower, (ver. 2) are figures suggestive of David's situation in the wilderness when fleeing from Saul. Moreover, the psalm is evidently not spoken on some particular occasion of danger and distress, as is the case with so many others, but is a grateful review of the perils and conflicts of a long period, now happily surmounted.

It does not follow from verse 21, "I have kept the ways of Jehovah, and have not wickedly departed from my God," that it was written before his great sin with Bath-sheba; for verses 39, 43, plainly refer to the subsequent rebellions of Absalom and Sheba. The assertion of his uprightness stands in special connection with the Lord saving him from Saul, by whom he was unjustly treated. And his crime, though aggravated, was a fall before a sudden temptation, which was repented of and forgiven, and not a permanent alienation in heart and life from the ways of God.

The title is justified in every point. Even critics like Ewald and Hitzig, who are commonly skeptical on the subject, admit its truth, and Von Lengerke, who at one time interpreted the psalm of the whole people, afterward receded from this position, and confessed that it could apply only to David. The mention of the temple (היכל) (ver. 6), is no objection, as the heavenly sanctuary is meant.

Psalms li could only have been written by David. The prayer (ver. 14), "Deliver me from blood guiltiness," joined with the broken-hearted penitence and earnest piety which the psalm breathes throughout, points directly to his crime in the matter of Uriah, to which the title refers it. דמים, *blood*, can mean nothing but the guilt of murder. It cannot, with Hupfeld, be explained of sin in general, nor with Hitzig be made to mean that the Psalmist's own life is threatened. The prayer for Zion (ver. 18), attached to this supplication for personal

forgiveness, implies that the welfare of the people at large was intimately connected with the fortunes of the petitioner, which again suits King David.

It has, however, been alleged that verses 18, 19 must have been written in the exile; that "build thou the walls of Jerusalem" implies their ruined condition, and "then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar" suggests a future resumption of sacrificial services at present suspended. This might be answered, as some have proposed, by saying that these closing verses are a subsequent addition to the psalm. But if they be omitted it would have no fitting termination, and the addition, if it were one, would not be at variance with the doctrine of the psalm. Verse 16 implies the existence of the sanctuary and the ritual: else how could sacrifice be given, if God did delight in it! God's not delighting in sacrifice, nor having pleasure in burnt-offering cannot be interpreted to mean, as Dr. Robertson Smith insists,* "the fall of Jerusalem has temporarily suspended the sacrificial ordinances," whether we regard the expressions themselves or the parallels in Psa. 1 and in the prophets. Nor do these words depreciate sacrifice as in itself not pleasing to God, which would be in direct contradiction to verse 19. They are evidently intended to exalt the broken and contrite heart above the outward formal offering: while nevertheless "sacrifices of righteousness" do meet acceptance, and shall be freely offered upon God's altar. There is a distinct verbal allusion in "good pleasure" (ver. 18), and "delight" (ver. 19), to the corresponding terms in verse 16, showing how intimately these verses are related together, and "building the walls" is not necessarily rebuilding them. If taken literally, to build a city's walls is to strengthen, enlarge, and fortify them (1 Kings xi, 27, xii, 25, xv, 17, 22), as was done both by David (2 Sam. v, 9) and Solomon (1 Kings iii, 1); or it may be used figuratively of giving prosperity (Psa. xxviii, 5, lxxxix, 4), which would correspond exactly with the parallel clause, Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.

Verse 4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" does not imply that no injury had been done to his fellow-man, which is expressly contradicted by verse 14, but that he was most of all impressed by the enormity of his criminality against God. And

* *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 416.

this is precisely what David said to Nathan (2 Sam. xxii, 13), "I have sinned against the Lord." There is no inconsistency in his imploring a thorough inward assurance of that forgiveness which Nathan told him was already granted. And it is altogether natural that, conscience-stricken for his great crime, he should be reminded of his native depravity, and should ask to have all his iniquities blotted out. Nothing can be imagined more congruous to the situation than this entire psalm from first to last. Hitzig suggests that it must have been written by a prophet, inasmuch as he proposes (ver. 13) to teach transgressors God's ways; and that he is probably identical with the author of Isa. xl-xvi, since there are several remarkable coincidences in the language of the psalm and of those chapters. But several other psalms of David express the same characteristic resolve to impart to others the lesson which he himself has learned. And the coincidences with Isaiah, which are not restricted to a single portion of his prophecies, simply show that he was familiar with the psalm and adopted its language.

Besides the psalms of David already considered there are twelve others, which are in their titles connected with particular incidents in his life, and thus enable us to follow him through the most eventful portion of his career.

These titles cannot possibly be mere conjectural adaptations of certain psalms to the history of David as this is given in the books of the Old Testament. It is obvious from a simple inspection of them that their titles are not drawn from the Books of Samuel, but are based on independent sources of information.

Thus Psalm vii is said to be one "which David sang unto the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite." We look in vain in the sacred history for answers to the questions: Who was Cush? and What were the words which are here meant? Jewish imagination found here a symbolic name of Saul. Luther applied it to Shimei. These are baseless fancies. But the statement, brief as it is, explains itself, and the situation is obvious. The Psalmist is pursued by numerous foes (ver. 1); and his life is in peril, particularly from one whom in his might and ferocity he compares to a lion rending his soul in pieces, while there is none to deliver. Ver. 2. This formidable adversary was stirred up to increased violence by base and unfounded mis-

representations—charges which the Psalmist indignantly repels, appealing to God as the witness of his integrity, and professing his readiness to suffer the last extreme of hostility and degradation if the foul accusation were true.

O Jehovah my God, if I have done this ;
 If there be iniquity in my hands ;
 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me ;
 (Yea, I have delivered him that without cause was mine
 adversary:)

Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it ;
 Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,
 And lay my glory in the dust.

It is impossible not to recognize David, the object of Saul's deadly malignity and hunted by him relentlessly, and yet magnanimously sparing his pursuer's life when he had him in his power, while he committed himself for protection and for vindication to the Lord alone. In his remonstrance with Saul he says (1 Sam. xxiv, 9, 11): "Wherefore hearkenest thou to men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? . . . Know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee, though thou huntest after my soul to take it." He here, precisely as in the psalm, traces Saul's pursuit of him to the words of men like Cush, who filled the king's ear with slanders against David, as though he were plotting to injure Saul. In both he asserts his innocence, and in almost identical terms, and while refraining from avenging himself he pleads with God, the supreme Judge of the world, to see that justice is done. The psalm is throughout in exact correspondence with the history; but the title gives the name of one of these detractors, which could not have been learned from the historical books which we possess. And in so doing it simply refers to him and to his words briefly and without explanation, as it would have been natural to do at the time when the affair was notorious, but as no later writer would have done if he had wished to be understood.

It is equally apparent that other titles are drawn from sources of information distinct from the Books of Samuel. Thus Psa. xxxiv is by David "when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed." A single phrase, "feigned madness" or "changed his behavior," occurs alike in this title and in the narrative (1 Sam. xxi, 14); but as that is

the proper Hebrew mode of expressing the idea to be conveyed it would naturally be used by distinct writers. But the different names given to the king show plainly that one has not been derived from the other. This has, in fact, been urged as discrediting the title. Thus Dr. Robertson Smith (*Encyc. Brit.* xx, p. 33) says: "Even the bare names of the old history were no longer correctly known, when Abimelech (the Philistine king in the stories of Abraham and Isaac) could be substituted in the title of *Psa.* xxxiv for Achish, king of Gath." This imputation of so gross a blunder is altogether gratuitous. The common title of the Philistine kings was Abimelech, as that of the kings of Egypt was Pharaoh, and of the emperors of Rome was Cæsar. The individual name of this particular king of Gath was Achish. Either one or the other was equally correct. The accuracy of the title cannot therefore be impugned, while at the same time its independence of the Books of Samuel is established.

A like independence of, and at the same time substantial consistency with, the Books of Samuel is particularly evident in the title to *Psa.* lx, composed by David, "when he strove with Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of Salt twelve thousand." The conflict with and victory over the king of Zobah is recorded *2 Sam.* viii, 3, *ff.*, who is said to have been aided by the Syrians of Damascus; but nothing is said in that connection of Aram-naharaim, or Mesopotamia. The title is not in error, however, in joining them together, since we learn from *2 Sam.* x, 16 that Mesopotamia was subject to Hadarezer, king of Zobah, and must, therefore, have sent its contingent to his army. A further seeming discrepancy concerns the person of the victor in the valley of salt. *2 Sam.* viii, 13 names David, the title of the psalm Joab, and *1 Chron.* xviii, 12 Abishai, Joab's brother; the simple explanation of which is that Abishai was in immediate command during the engagement (*comp.* *2 Sam.* x, 10), but the successes of the subordinate may with equal propriety be credited to his superiors in rank; to Joab, the commander-in-chief, and to David the king, who was the supreme head over all the forces.

The victory was over Edom according to Chronicles and the title of the psalm, but over Aram according to Samuel, which

may be simply a textual error involving the change of a single letter, or may indicate a combination between the Edomites and Syrians. The number of the slain is reckoned eighteen thousand in Samuel and Chronicles, but in the title before us twelve thousand, the larger being perhaps also a more comprehensive estimate. These various superficial differences between the account in Samuel and the statement in the title, while capable of ready reconciliation and not impairing the credibility of either, nevertheless indicate their derivation from distinct sources.

And the psalm clearly evidences itself as belonging to the time to which the title assigns it. It gives us a fuller insight into the course of events during the momentous conflicts which are so summarily recounted in Samuel, and only their successful issue indicated. The psalm introduces us to a crisis when humiliating and discouraging reverses had been experienced, though the strong faith of the Psalmist in the covenant God of Israel did not permit him to doubt of the ultimate result. No disaster is recorded in Samuel, it is true, which does not enter into the particulars of the several campaigns. But these wars of David were waged against formidable foes, and it is not surprising if in the course of them he experienced temporary defeats. It is also easy to be supposed that while he was engaged with his armies in the north Edom may have eagerly seized the opportunity of invading the territory of Israel in his absence, and have threatened, not only the peace and security, but even the stability of his kingdom. This would account for the hasty return of Joab, the battle in the valley of salt, and the terrible retaliation inflicted upon Edom in the exterminating campaign which followed (1 Kings xi, 15, 16). The situation depicted in the psalm is thus satisfactorily explained: the calamities deplored in the opening verses (vers. 1-3), the advance into Edom foreshadowed (ver. 9), and the ground of confidence upon which alone the Psalmist rests (vers. 6-8)—God's sure word that the entire land of Israel was his, and that only abject humiliation awaited those insolent foes who would wrest its possession from him.

Ewald arbitrarily divides the psalm into two separate odes of different periods, but feels constrained to refer one of them to the time of David. It is a curious indication of how little value

is sometimes to be attached to critical criteria that the words which Hitzig points out as evidences of late date fall within what Ewald considers the oldest portion of the psalm. The conjectures which refer this impassioned lyric to the reign of Jehoshaphat, or to the period of the Maccabees or after it, are all wrecked by the impossibility of adapting them to the language here used. Hupfeld says: "It is against the reference to the Maccabæan or the Persian period that nothing in the psalm requires so late a time, and that the vigorous and highly poetic character of the complaint, prayer, and promise points to the time of the existence of the kingdom." He is himself disposed to place it in the reign of some one of the later Jewish kings, for the reason that in his opinion "the promise is the idea current among the prophets, of a restoration of the unity of the kingdom, which presupposes the schism and the experience of its doleful consequences." The real fact, however, is that the psalm presents the unbroken unity of the whole land of Israel, not as an ideal to be hereafter attained, but as an already existing condition, and thus fixes beyond reasonable contradiction its date prior to the schism of Jeroboam.

The titles thus far reviewed are evidently independent of the Books of Samuel, and based upon some other source of information. They even seem to point most naturally to a contemporary, who was personally cognizant of the situation; and there is no reason why this should not be the author himself. So that it is quite reasonable to assume that the same thing holds likewise in the case of a title like that of *Psa. liv*, where the language is identical with *1 Sam. xxiii, 19*, or *xxvi, 1*. The title repeats the very words of the Ziphites, and hence, of course, agrees with the passage in Samuel, where their words are also reported, but is not necessarily borrowed from it.

But apart from the question of the date or the source of the titles now under consideration, it is alleged that they do not accord with the contents of the psalms to which they are prefixed, and which cannot, therefore, be reasonably supposed to belong to the occasion thus indicated. Dr. Robertson Smith waives them aside in the following magisterial manner: "To refer *Psa. lii* to *Doeg*, *Psa. liv* to the Ziphites, *Psa. lix* to David when watched in his house by Saul, implies an absolute lack of the very elements of historical judgment." But

this over positive and contemptuous assertion rests on a mistaken conception of the origin of the titles, and of their claim to be regarded as trustworthy. As they are not inferences deduced from the psalms themselves, they are not discredited when the internal evidence does not of itself demonstrate their truth or limit the composition of the psalms to the particular occasion therein stated. As traditional statements embodied in the text itself, there is presumptive evidence of their truth, unless there is good reason for setting them aside. No one would dream of discarding positive information respecting the authorship of modern hymns or the circumstances in which they were produced, because it could not be proved to be certainly true from the contents of the hymns.

In Psa. lix the Psalmist prays for deliverance from foes who lie in wait for his life, going about the city night after night to execute their treacherous purpose. David was then living in Gibeah, the residence of Saul. This is the city referred to, and we learn from the psalm that Saul not only sent hired assassins on one occasion to take his life, but that David was aware of their having been watching for an opportunity repeatedly before to execute their treacherous purpose under cover of the darkness. The mention of "heathen" (vers. 5, 8) has led some to suppose that foreign enemies are here intended, who were besieging an Israelitish city. But the universality of the language, "all the heathen," shows that the particular foes of the Psalmist are not intended. It is an appeal to God, who shall judge the whole world of mankind, to inflict merited punishment on those who, without any fault of his, are thirsting for his blood (vers. 2-4), and use deceit and lies to accomplish their nefarious purpose (ver. 12). The title matches the psalm precisely. And the same is true of Psa. lii and Psa. liv likewise.

In regard to all these titles which are now under consideration, it is commonly confessed, even by those who are most skeptical respecting their truth, that the psalms to which they are prefixed correspond to the situation indicated in them, and that no real variance can be pointed out by which their correctness can be positively disproved. Only it is alleged that the psalms are not so exclusively adapted to the situation stated in the titles, that they cannot equally well be

supposed to have originated under any other similar circumstances. This, however, is no serious objection. The traditional testimony respecting the occasion of particular psalms is, in some instances, as we have seen, very explicitly corroborated by the internal evidence which points directly to it and to no other. It is sufficient if in other cases the contents of the psalm are consistent with the declaration of the title without in any very positive manner confirming it. The presumption in favor of the correctness of the title abides in full force so long as it is uncontradicted. And it is not to be expected that the contents of the psalms will in the majority of cases identify the precise occasion on which they were conceived or written. For the Psalmist prefers to dwell on the general features of his situation, which associate him with those who, in the experience of similar treatment, share his pious trust in God, rather than on those minor details which are peculiar to his individual case and distinguish it from all others. This was both more congenial to his own pious meditations and fitted them subsequently for liturgical use. It is this feature of the psalms which led to their admission into the temple-worship, to assist and direct the devotion of the assembled people, while purely personal and local compositions, such as David's lament over Saul, Deborah's triumphant song, or the song of Moses at the passage of the Red Sea, were necessarily excluded.

Psa. xxx is ascribed to David, and there is no reason to dispute his authorship of it. It is not quite clear how the words "the dedication of the house" should be understood. On the one hand it has been contended that this simply indicates its later liturgical use. Thus Psa. xcii is entitled "A Song for the sabbath day," and, according to Jewish tradition, it was sung at the time of the Sabbath morning sacrifice in the services of the second temple. In the Syriac psalter there are many liturgical titles of this description, introduced from the usages of the old Syrian Church. According to Jewish authorities, Psa. xxx was appointed to be sung at the feast of the dedication of the temple instituted by Judas Maccabæus on the occasion of its being re-opened and cleansed after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. If this is what is indicated in the title, it does not imply that it was originally composed for that occasion, which there is nothing in the psalm itself to suggest. But an old

psalm of David was selected to be used, which was so far appropriate as that it celebrates a change through God's mercy from distress to joy.

It is not improbable, however, that the title indicates, not this later liturgical use, but, as in the case of the other psalms of David, the occasion on which it was prepared. This could not then mean that it was composed by David either at the time of erecting his sacred tent in Zion for the reception of the ark, or with a view to its subsequent use at the dedication of Solomon's temple. Nor is it probable that the house here meant is David's palace, and the occasion some religious service consequent upon its erection, or David's return to it after the fall of Absalom. There is another occasion in David's life to which the language of the title corresponds, and with which the contents of the psalm agree in a very remarkable manner. When the plague sent in consequence of David's vaingloriously numbering the people was stayed by his sacrifice offered at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and the Lord answered him by fire from heaven upon the altar, David said (1 Chron. xxii, 1), "This is the house of the Lord God," recognizing this immediate divine interposition as an indication of the site of the future temple. The consecration of this spot may be regarded as the dedication referred to in the title. The pride which led him to number the people and the fearful judgment inflicted in consequence are referred to in verses 6, 7. His earnest prayer for the removal of the plague follows, verses 8-10. God's returning favor after the brief but terrible manifestations of his displeasure is celebrated, verses 5, 11; comp. 1 Chron. xxi, 16. And that this psalm was designed to be sung on a public occasion of thanksgiving appears from verse 4.

The various titles that are suggestive of the occasion on which the psalms were prepared find thus their adequate justification in the language of the psalms themselves. The great majority of David's psalms, however, simply bear his name in their titles with no suggestion of the particular time at which they were composed. In regard to some of them this can be reasonably conjectured; for example, Psa. iv is so closely related in its character and its expressions to Psa. iii that it must belong to the same general time, the rebellion of Absalom. Psa. xxxii,

which recites the blessedness of him whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, is, in all probability, to be referred to the same general period as Psa. li, only the pardon for which the Psalmist so penitently entreats in the latter has been assured to him. Others as clearly belong to the period of the persecution by Saul. And there seems good reason to refer Psa. xv and Psa. xxiv to the time when the ark was transported to Zion. It is not to be expected, however, that the particular occasion can be pointed out in every case, or even in a considerable proportion of cases. It is enough to know that they are from the pen of the royal Psalmist himself. Even this has been disputed, but on grounds which are clearly insufficient.

Thus Dr. Robertson Smith objects: "Psa. xx and xxi are not spoken by a king, but addressed to a king by his people." But some one must have voiced these loyal utterances of the people, and given shape to their supplications on his behalf, and their expressions of confidence that the blessing of the Lord would attend him and grant him the desired success in his undertakings. And who could more appropriately do this than the sweet Psalmist of Israel, whose words they were accustomed to chant in their devotions?

He further says, "There is a whole series of hymns in which the writer identifies himself with the poor and needy, the righteous people of God suffering in silence at the hands of the wicked, without other hope than patiently to wait for the interposition of Jehovah. Psa. xii, xxv, xxxvii, xxxviii, etc. Nothing can be further removed than this from any possible situation in the life of the David of the Books of Samuel." But this overlooks entirely the moral and religious aspect of Saul's hostility to David. Saul knew (1 Sam. xv, 28) and the people knew (xxv, 28-30) that the Lord had rejected him and had chosen David. This enhanced his jealousy of David and his bitterness against him. Samuel had no further dealings with Saul. Saul massacred the priests because he suspected that they were partisans of David. Abiathar fled for his life and took refuge with David. David might fairly regard himself as representing the cause of God, while Saul and those who took part with him in his malignity and cruelty were its enemies, and were ever ready to vent their hostility upon any true servants of God who were friendly to him. And this is just the situation

depicted in such psalms as are above excepted to. Psa. xxxvii was written when the Psalmist was old, and so cannot be referred to the time of Saul. But in all that is said in it of the prosperity of the wicked and their hostility to the righteous, it is observable that there is no intimation that the Psalmist was himself in a suffering condition. The seeming inequalities of divine Providence belong to all times, and the temporary success of evil machinations can be rectified by no human administrations.

It is further objected that Psa. cviii is made up of extracts from Psa. lvii and Psa. lx. But, as both these are psalms of David, portions of each when put together are properly attributed to him. It is also said that Psa. cxxxix cannot be David's on account of the Aramean character of the language. Perhaps, however, even this is not decisive. As it is confessed to be a psalm worthy of David in every other respect, and particularly in its elevation of thought, vigor of expression, and poetic fervor, it is supposable, to say the least, that in successive reproductions some of its words and forms may have been modified into conformity with the usage of a later period.

On the whole the result of our inquiry is this: The high antiquity of the titles and the external evidence in their favor create a strong presumption of their truth. This is corroborated in numerous instances by the internal evidence. They should, therefore, be accepted as true, except in individual cases, if any such exist, where there is clear proof to the contrary. We are warranted, accordingly, to take these psalms into the account in forming an estimate of the character of David, or of the religion of Israel in his day, and to pronounce that critical hypothesis certainly false which holds a view of Israel's religion which is inconsistent with the truth of even a single one of these titles. If David wrote any of the psalms attributed to him, however few, the entire hypothesis of the history of Israel's religion framed by the Kuenen and Wellhausen school of critics vanishes into smoke. For they all breathe an elevated and spiritual religion, which according to the scheme propounded by these critics could not possibly have existed in David's days.

M. Henry