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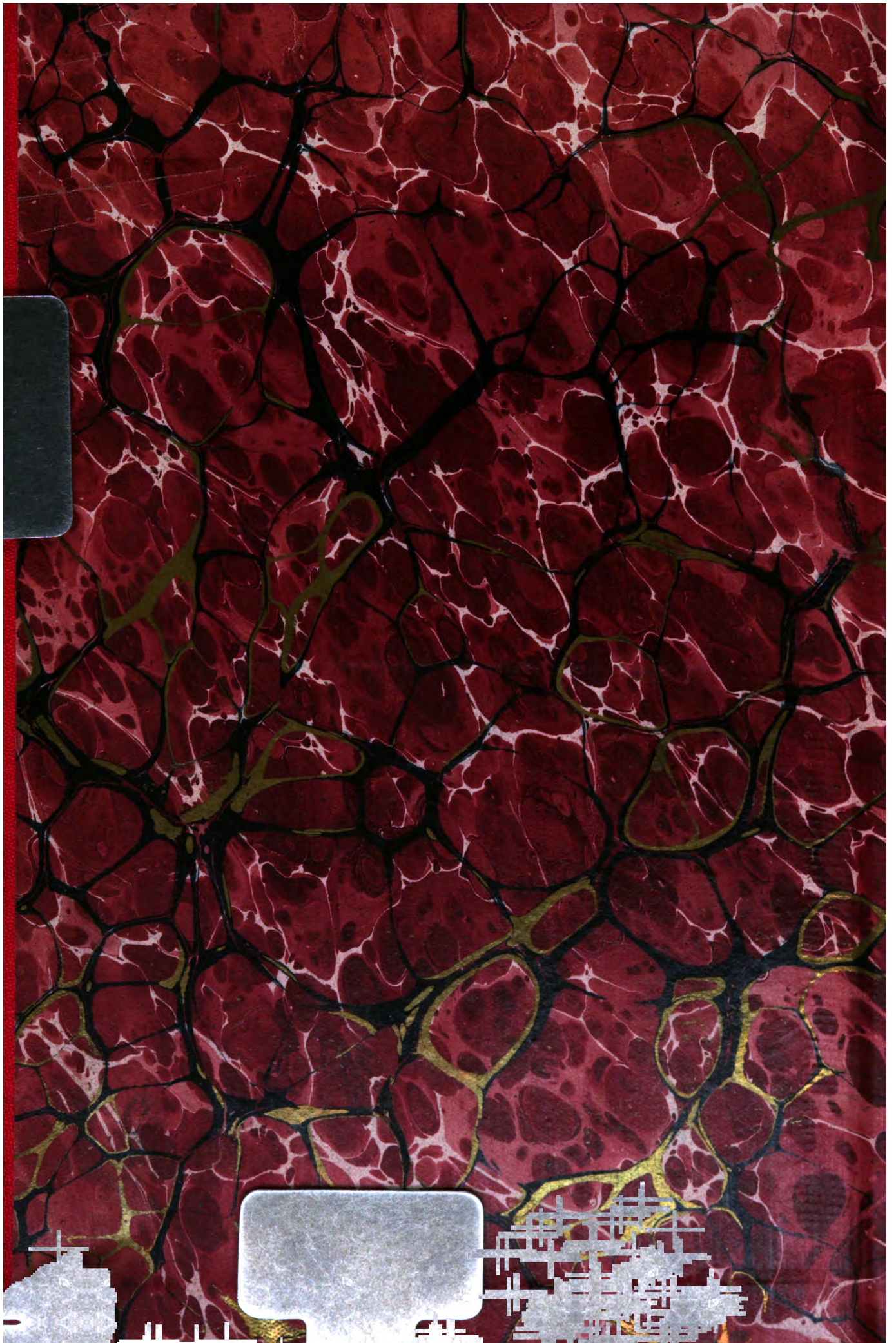
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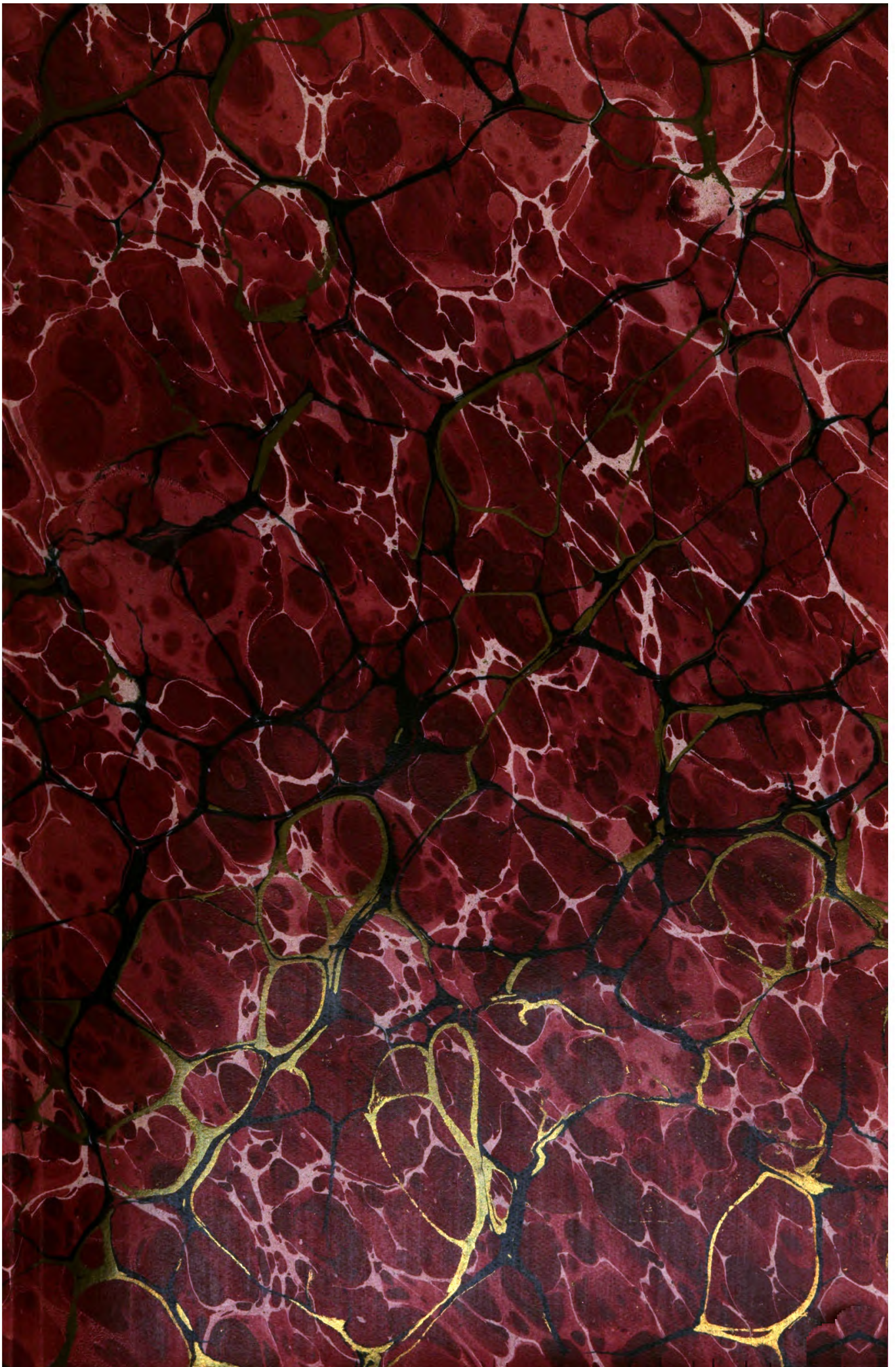
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BY THE REV. WILLIAM WALLACE, D. D., LITT. D.,

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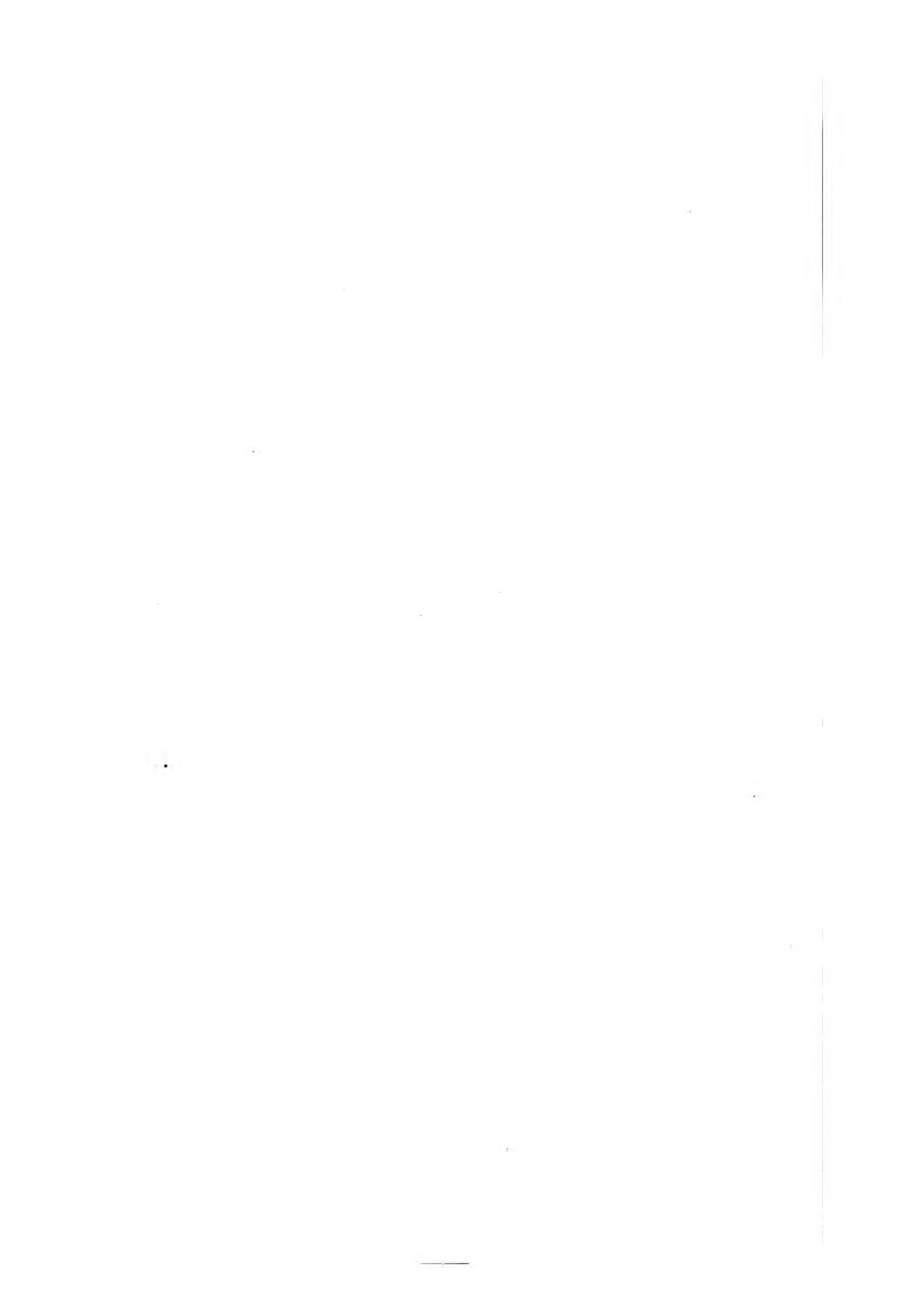
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# CHRIST IN THE PSALMS.

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D.LITT. UNIV. DUBL.



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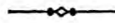
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GUILELMUS WALLACE.



## CHRIST IN THE PSALMS.



THE Book of the Psalms is so much used that any suggestion bearing upon it is important and may be influential; and when, as my subject, Christ in the Psalms, purports to do, *a principle of interpretation* is discussed, the matter is the more worthy of our attention, as in fact it becomes of the nature of a general commentary on every sentiment and purpose of the book.

The topic itself is fruitful, and if decided in our minds one way or another must constantly and largely affect our study and profit of this 'Prayer Book of Christ and His Saints.'

It is the *theology* of the Psalms we are expressly to consider, but I shall approach this by two preliminary steps, each easy to enlarge upon, but, as only preliminary, I must not treat them as though they were the main points of our inquiry. What, first I would ask, is the value of the Psalms? Every heart responds, Much every way; all our spiritual experience combines to prove that the Psalms are an instrument of instruction, doctrine, reproof, and correction, of the most searching and effective kind. At all times this has been acknowledged. In public and private among the Jews the songs of David were the communion of devout souls among the chosen people. In public and private our Lord Himself and His Apostles sang their words and praised God. In public and private, in the annals of the Christian Church, these Psalms have been the source of praise and penitence, of prayer and trust in God. I hesitate not to say that there is no truer test of a Christ-like and Catholic mind than the value and use made by us of this book.

Now, in the second place, Why do we, why has anyone valued the Psalms? The reply is, Because they are spiritual. I use from memory the sentiment of Carlyle, 'There is no truer history of the struggles and progress, the falls and the rising again, the hopes and fears, of a human soul, than in this book of David. The spiritual history of the soul is here made plain; and this book, not of an age but of all time, will be

recurred to with sympathy and interest as long as the soul asserts her place to influence the happiness or misery of man.' We value this book, then, because it is spiritual; we use it, because its words are spirit and life.

By those two steps, the value and spiritual character of the Psalms, we approach our express subject, their theology. For within the circle of the Christian faith and Church it must be asserted as a principle and fact, that *spiritual* means, and only can mean, quickened and vivified by the *Spirit of Christ*; and for us to say, 'these Psalms are valued because they are spiritual,' is in effect and most significantly to say, 'they are connected with Christ, the light and manifestation of God, of whose fulness of grace and truth anyone or anything must have in measure received, to be spiritual in essence, or spiritual in power.'

*How far* then do we think of Christ being in the Psalms? Such is the question we have. May he teach us, as he does to faithful souls, the Truth as it is in Jesus.

Before I proceed directly to this matter, one word as to the meaning of 'Christ.' I think nothing can be more plain than that we are bound to admit this word as expressing not only the head of the Church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Intercessor and future Judge, but also the mystical Body which is incorporated with Him by the Holy Ghost, with which He is as intimately connected as flesh and bones are with the soul of man, and from which He must never be dissociated. I speak concerning Christ and His Church.

If it be urged that such enlarged ideas respecting Christ are the fruit of New Testament revelation, and therefore must be carefully scanned before they are made to explain or give vitality to any part of the Old Testament revelation, I disclaim this as the true posture of our minds towards the Word of God. It is gratuitous; it is unhistorical; it is unphilosophic. Why the early dawn should be so unlike the meridian light no one can hope to prove. That the Jew knew more of his Messiah, His character, and the anticipations of revelation about Him, than we are inclined now-a-days to think, is, I believe, a very authentic historical fact. And that a book written by the Spirit of God should not have, as its real sense, the Gospel sense, is to my mind unphilosophic. Granted that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and that God spake in any wise of His blessing for mankind through His Son, it may well be true that if the Spirit of Christ made Scripture spiritual in olden time, then Christ was in it, and *whole* not partial Christ—Christ and His Church, ever one Body and one Spirit. It is *this* Christ which is in the Psalms, Christ the Mediator between God and Man. One with the Father, who declared, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.' One with us, as He Himself declared, 'In the midst of My brethren will I sing praise unto Thee.'

How far then is this Christ the efficient Spirit of the Psalms? Three statements are made. One, that He is there as He is in any pious and religious writing of the Jews, not as a revelation but as a sentiment; and so, when in the New Testament anything is said to be fulfilled in our Lord, it is only by application, and that Jesus Christ said and did things rather as the coincidence of an idea than by any external or internal intention of the Psalms; and a similar *ideal* explanation is given as to the connexion of the history of God's earlier people and the Christian Church. I suppose most of us have given up this way of Christ being in the Psalms. If you come on to either of the others, this one will be left behind.

The second statement is, that the correspondence between the Psalms and the Person and Character of Christ is mainly to be found in the *typical* position of the authors of the Psalms and the circumstances of the people of Israel. The distinctly predictive element varies in amount among the holders of this theory. 'I think,' says an emphatic assertor of it, 'that the 110th Psalm may be strictly predictive'; but he almost apologizes for this concession. It is easy to see the usefulness of this key to the interpretation of the Psalms, and the advantage it may seem to give in meeting some difficulties which beset the subject, Christ in the Psalms. But it does not satisfy, and chiefly for this reason, because it seems to evade and weaken the conclusions we make from the use made of the Psalms by the Christ Himself and His Apostles.

To some extent I may illustrate what I am coming to, by the expression, 'That Rock was Christ.' Doubtless whole schools of interpretation have been content to say 'that Rock was a type of Christ,' though what this means in this particular case, it is difficult to discover, but I am content to believe that the Apostle believed in a more spiritual and sacramental presence of Christ in His ancient Church, and that this is the explanation of the Rock being the medium through which Christ was given to faithful souls. How far it is necessary to be distinctly conscious of how God makes these things to be so, is doubtful. Perhaps, however, the ancient Church was more conscious than we choose to say. Take one instance for all: 'Give the King Thy judgments' *may* have been a prayer for Solomon, and it may be a useful way of thinking and writing, to say that this Solomon was transfigured before the end of the Psalm, and that the One greater than Solomon rose before the mind of the Psalmist when he exclaimed, 'His Name shall endure for ever; His Name shall remain under the sun among the posterities, which shall be blessed through Him': but, on the other hand, Why the writer and saint, the prophet and man of God, who transfigured the Anointed One of the second Psalm into the King of whom Jehovah said, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee,' may not have *begun* with the conception of the Christ of God, the King of Israel, of Whose dominion there should

be no end, and have known that *this* Divine King was really, and—I must use the word—sacramentally connected with the seed of David's loins, who should sit upon his seat;—this is what I cannot see. If David spake *in the Spirit*, why may he not be allowed to know the simplest lesson which we draw from the Incarnation of the Son of God—that the human is the medium of the Divine?

That the Jews thought this is evidenced by the Targum (paraphrase), 'O God, give the knowledge of Thy judgments to the King Messiah, and Thy justice to the Son of King David.' This and two other similar testimonies are given by Perowne. The Midrash Tehillim (Commentary of the Psalms) says, 'This is the King Messiah, for it is said, And a stem shall go forth from the root of Jesse.' Such paraphrase, such commentary, is exactly implied in our *Lord's* reading of the Psalms, 'What think ye of Christ? How doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord?' Our Lord does not blame the Pharisees for finding Christ too much in the Psalms, but too little, and not accepting David's Lord as the Messiah equally with David's Son. This veil was, alas! is, on their hearts in the reading of the Old Testament. When they turn to the Lord there, for He is in spirit there, they shall be healed.

I say then that this way of explaining the connexion of the Psalms and Christ, by saying the authors and the circumstances of the nation were typical, and God made it so, and so far and no further, seems to me to fall short of the true explanation, which is, That the Psalms are *inspired*—such is the word we may choose to express the third way of interpretation,—and that Christ is in the Psalms as He is anywhere, wherever He is, not by talking of Him or showing a pattern of Him, but really.

I think this is very strongly forced upon us, by our admission of the points in which we allow the 'typical reference.' Why anyone should imagine the Resurrection and Ascension to glory, the Crucifixion and double Nature of our Lord, to be contained in the Psalms, above and beyond the general ideas, which the offices and character of the King, the Priest, the Prophet, the righteous sufferer enduring the world's evil and trusting in the goodness of God, would properly convey;—why anyone should admit this, and still talk merely of types, it is hard to say. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.' This, says the Apostle, the Psalmist did not speak of David, but of Christ, 'that *His* soul was not left in hell, neither *His* flesh did see corruption.'

If we are to follow St. Paul, and say, 'Again He saith, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth,' and distinctly use this as speaking of the Son of God, and to prove His majesty over all the angels of God, then we must have used the Psalter with the familiar,

habitual, primary sense that the Lord Christ is there, His glory and His wondrous nature and history set forth, and the dispensation of God by His Son spoken of according to the measure of spiritual perception and faith.

But here occurs the objection—‘Why do you speak of the Psalter? Why choose it out to find Christ in it? Moses spake of Me, says Christ; the Law, the Prophets, as well as the Psalms, told of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.’ Ask, first, any Christian soul if they think there is no difference with the Book of the Psalms; if (as in the seventeenth chapter of St. John), there is not here a spot, the Holy of Holies of Scripture, the Shekinah and Mercy-seat: they will not be able to give a reason, but they will feel it. But there is a very probable reason. The Psalms were, by the appointment of God’s Providence, Who feedeth His flock, put into the mouth of the Church of old, put into the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself, put into the mouth of the Apostles of our Lord, and put into our mouth, to be used as the expression of our Communion with God, our own personal utterances, to be the basis of the devotion which the Holy Ghost teacheth and not man. And so there is a cause why the Spirit of Christ, which maketh words to be Spirit and Life, should dwell fully there.

‘But consider,’ says an objector, ‘the difficulties. See the expressions of guilty consciousness,—see the sentiments of revenge,—see how weakly the hope of eternal life is here found.’ We will consider this, I say, but we will remember still, that our most holy and adorable Lord, when He sojourned among us, refused not to utter these Psalms, to join in their declarations, and to meditate upon and familiarly quote them.

There are mentioned, not counting repetitions of the same passage, above seventy passages of the Psalms incorporated in the teaching of the New Testament. Surely this is a first step to accepting this book as one concerning Christ. But, besides, we cannot get over the conviction that in some real sense our Lord, the Christ, and His Apostles, the immediate elements of His body, which is Christ (so St. Paul never hesitates to declare), used these Psalms as making known to them the mystery of God, which is great, ‘manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.’

But how could He say, ‘Heal Me, for I have sinned against Thee’? How could He say, ‘Create in Me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within Me’? How, I ask in reply, if we had not known that He did it, could we have conceived the Son of God to have exclaimed, in the words of a Psalm, the true sentiment of His soul, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ But we know that He did exclaim it, and so we say there is a truth here we adoringly approach and strive to comprehend.

Now there is a truth equally difficult but most practically easy to

receive, the Union of Christ with His people, His being in them, and they in Him. Our old man was crucified with Christ. He took our sorrows; He bare our infirmities. In all our afflictions He was afflicted. Has He no part in the one great affliction, which is after all the only affliction, the sorrow which sin bears in upon my soul? Is His temptation so unreal, that the travail of His soul is utterly alien from my one great travail, sin warring in my members and warring against the law of my mind? If I must understand it, and tell it, it is greater than I am able to express, but *He is one with me*. In the waters, in the agony of my soul, in my weakness, my transgression, the Lamb of God who takes away sin by bearing it, and entering within my nature to do so, does, as one with me, take away the sin of the world.

‘But,’ answers the typical interpreter, ‘do not let us force more into Scripture than it justifies.’ I answer, Do not take away my Lord. ‘Never,’ says the typical commentator, ‘is Christ to say, I have sinned. He is only *made* of God sin; He is made to bear our sins. The step is prodigious between the one dogma and the other expression.’ *He is one with me, and I am a sinner*: so I answer. He received sinners. And if His body penitent—for it is a *penitent* exclaims, ‘Heal me, I have sinned against Thee’; ‘Create in me a clean heart’;—if His Body *penitent* must have these penitential gifts of the Spirit of Christ (not a thing separate, but one with Christ, remember), then Christ in the Psalms utters, without blasphemy to His holy nature, these things which the nature of mine He has taken must feel and express, Heal me, for I have sinned against Thee. And here too Christ and His Church are for us One Christ, and explain, as they did for Athanasius and Augustine, the use Christ made of these Psalms, and the use the Church makes in her spiritual service to God, by which is meant a service moved by the Spirit of Christ which dwells in His Body.

‘Why should He not say “from the face of my sins,”’ says Augustine on the thirty-eighth Psalm, ‘Who said to Saul, “Why persecutest thou Me,”’ Who, however, being in Heaven, now suffered from no persecutors? But just as, in that passage, the Head spake for the Body, so here too the Head speaks the words of the Body; whilst you hear at the same time the accents of the Head Itself also. Yet do not either, when you hear the voice of the Body, separate the Head from it; nor the Body when you hear the voice of the Head; because “they are no more twain but one flesh.”’\*

It is a more difficult task to see how we shall reconcile the words of Christ, ‘Ye know not what spirit ye are of,’ with the anathemas (thirty in one Psalm, the 109th), ‘Contend Thou with them that contend with me. Let his children be fatherless. Let his days be few.’

\* See St. Augustine’s Expositions on Psalms: on Psalm xxxviii. 3, Oxford Translation.

Here, in reply, we must say that there are things described in Scripture as the issue of faith, which, if we did not hear God saying so, we would perhaps fail to see sprung from that principle. The eleventh of Hebrews shows this. But when we hear God saying it, we see that the principle has room, and we may have been forgetful of its probable presence.

The need of zeal, the need of justice, the need of the destruction of the enemies of God, may be lost sight of, if we measure all Christ's acts and words by the sentiment, 'The Son of Man is not come to destroy but to save,' and the wrath of the Lamb become impossible because of our sense of the love of God. 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron': Is not this in the Psalm which bids us 'Kiss the Son lest He be angry'? 'Until all enemies be put under His feet': Is not this in the Psalm which declares Christ's glory and session at the right hand of God, and is it not made by the Apostle the very foundation of the ultimate victory of those that are Christ's? He who sought the wandering Samaritans who offended against the Son of Man was filled with a different spirit toward the proud hypocrites who offended against the Holy Ghost. 'Woe unto you! How can ye escape the damnation of hell?' If, however, we have any faith or sense of Christ in ancient or newer covenants of God's Will to man, we know the judgments of God led men at all times to repentance, and the tenderest desire for their return to God is compatible with the zeal which denounces all that is carnal and false.

As to the other question, 'How can Christ be in the Psalms when the eternal life and immortality He brings appears so faintly there?' Davison says the Law had not manifestly the motive of eternal life, because man would think it came by the Law; it is the gift of God by Jesus Christ. So we may say of all the Old Testament; if it was God's will (and it was so) to make the Gospel have this prerogative, to bring life and immortality to light, then God may not have so manifestly presented it in the Psalms. But the answer is nearer still. If Christ be there, Christ the hope of glory,—then life and immortality and eternal hopes, and not transitory promises or carnal motives, were there, there effectively, constantly, after the measure of the Gift of God.

The Providence of God, the city of God, the enemies of God, and the supplies of God's grace, we need not dwell on. These are in the Psalms, and they all have their reference to Christ, easy to understand, constantly applied in the New Testament, and generally acknowledged. *Christ and His Church* explain these.

So I have endeavoured to set forth a *principle*, which we may fail in applying, but which I conceive Christ and His Apostles exhibit. It seems also to be proved by what I believe is a fact concerning the Canon



of the four first centuries. The early Church does not seem nervously anxious about the number of the books of the Gospels or the possession of a full canon of the Epistles ; their faith was not lost nor their love destroyed by one less or one more of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, for they were so fully persuaded of the fulness of the Scriptures of the Old Covenant to present Christ to their souls for salvation, that the study of them was practically accepted as making the Word of Christ dwell in them in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, for what the Old contained was what is revealed in the New.

We may end with the saying of Bishop Hall about the use of devotion. ' I hate superstition on the one side, and looseness on the other : but I find it hard to offend in too much devotion, easy in profaneness.' So we may humbly say and make our rule respecting this matter of ' Christ in the Psalms.'

THE END.











